

CUTBACK MANAGEMENT FOR CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES: A PLANNING AND BUDGETING MANUAL

by IRA CHALEFF

INCLUDES OFFICIAL EXPENSE ACCOUNT SURVEY RESULTS
AND COST-SAVING TIPS FOR HOUSE OFFICES

Gramm-Rudman Law Hits Home on Capitol Hill
Congressional Staffs and Spending Are Shrinking Under Deficit Reduction Act

By Sandra Sugawara
Washington Post Staff Writer

Stan Parris (R-Va.) recently announced he is planning to...

House Postmaster Enveloped by Mail
Budget-Cutting Law Leaves Its Stamp

By Susan Henrich
Washington Post Staff Writer

Gramm-Rudman-Hollings...

Senate Office Fires 22 Staff Members

Sergeant at Arms' Budget Cut

By Sandra Sugawara
Washington Post Staff Writer

...ago, Richard A. Hon...

Gramm-Rudmania In Office of House Clerk

To meet nearly \$800,000 in cuts to his 1986 personnel budget, House Clerk, Benjamin Guthrie laid off 19 employees last Thurs-

the names might be professionally damaging to the people. In the Clerk's testimony on February 19 before the House leg-

Did Hill Underestimate Deficit-Cutting Target?
Lawmakers Torn Between Action and Inaction

Raising Funds to Save Hill Staffers
Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) decided he cannot afford to lose any of his staff, but he cannot afford to keep all of them under the cuts mandated by the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings deficit-reduction law.

A CONGRESSIONAL MANAGEMENT FOUNDATION GUIDEBOOK

CUTBACK MANAGEMENT FOR CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES

A Planning and Budgeting Manual

by
IRA CHALEFF

**Edited by
Gary D. Serota**

**A CONGRESSIONAL MANAGEMENT FOUNDATION
GUIDEBOOK SERIES**

**Produced with the Cooperation of
the Accounting Firm
DELOITTE, HASKINS, & SELLS**

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Author Acknowledgments

This work grows out of CMF's almost decade-long efforts to provide better management tools for Members of Congress and their staffs. The founders and successive staff of CMF imbued it with a management philosophy and approach that is well tailored to the needs of congressional offices in the eighties. This current work reflects this philosophy, draws on approaches CMF has espoused for years and, we hope, builds on these in a way that materially contributes to CMF's mission. I am especially grateful to CMF's current executive director, Gary D. Serota, for my exposure to many of these concepts during the three years I have worked with him.

The success of CMF's projects depends on the willingness of congressional staff to share with us their expertise and contributions. At every step of the way, from project design to final edit, we consult with a wide variety of Hill veterans to ensure that we are "on target" as we strive to serve the needs of congressional offices.

Numerous congressional staff helped us fine-tune our survey instrument. Special thanks must go to Wendy Mills (Rep. Blaz-Guam) who, as a former finance office auditor, was a particularly knowledgeable resource. George Ann Way (Rep. Roth-WI) and Jim Hart (Rep. Applegate-Ohio) lent their years of experience to honing our questionnaire; they then went on to advise us on the outline and text of this manual as it developed.

There are several people to whom I am particularly indebted for their substantial contributions to the shape and scope of the project. Jim Thurber of American University earns a special mention for alerting me to the work of Charles H. Levine, currently with CRS. Charles Levine pioneered the subject of cutback management in the public sector and provided much of the conceptual framework for our adaptation of this formative body of knowledge to Congress. He enthusiastically supported our efforts, and helped us avoid the unaffordable luxury of re-inventing the wheel.

Jim Altenstadter, currently of H.I.S., is on the cutting edge of developing automated budgeting and accounting tools for congressional offices. Jim began to advise us on budgeting approaches when he was an AA, when CMF was developing material on budgeting for freshman offices. His continued cooperation in this direction has materially affected every aspect of this project.

The reader to whom I am most indebted for a meticulous critique is John Pontius of CRS' American Government Division. John brings a wealth of sensitivity to a project such as this, grounded both in formal training and years of hands-on experience.

Clay Nettles, a veteran budget manager for several congressional offices, assumed much of the responsibility for collating the cost-saving suggestions submitted by offices and enhancing them with his own considerable knowledge and in-depth interviews.

Three CMF interns worked long hours to input the information provided by offices and help tabulate, interpret and report out the results. These are: Jonathan Snyder (Princeton), Kurt Johnson (Stanford) and Scott Schoenen (University of California, Irvine). Jonathan played a pivotal role in managing our database and took scrupulous pains to assure accuracy of information. Kurt crafted the cost-saving tips into concise, well-organized packages.

Special thanks goes to Ellen McCarthy of the House Administration Committee whom we relied on for context and nuance in understanding the complexity of factors affecting congressional office allowances and expenditures. While any errors which might remain in this manual are entirely our responsibility, Ellen's input has contributed to minimizing these.

Sheldon Cann, after putting in 50-hour weeks of campaign committee work, spent evenings and weekends at CMF performing yeoman service inputting successive drafts of this manual.

At least a hundred AAs and office managers, who spent considerable time providing us with the raw expenditure information and cost-saving ideas which we requested, will forever remain anonymous. However, two particularly thoughtful, management-oriented AAs we interviewed at some length about their planning and budgeting processes deserve special mention — Bill Talmadge (Rep. Ray-GA) and Jay Eagen (Rep. Goodling-PA).

The final acknowledgement is the most important as it reflects the bottom line of this planning and budgeting manual. Primary and early funding for this project was provided by the accounting firm of Deloitte, Haskins and Sells. Joe McGavick and John Lively recognized the potential importance of this project for congressional offices and gave it their early endorsement. We were impressed by the care they took to understand the subtleties of the unique world of congressional office budgeting and accounting, to assure the project was on target and of maximum benefit. Beyond funding, they and Bill Rita gave us thoughtful, substantive input at each stage. While, once again, we are responsible for any inaccuracies which may have slipped through, their concern for the validity of our methodology has contributed to the quality of the final product.

INTRODUCTION

"Government organizations are neither immortal nor unshrinkable. Like growth, organizational decline . . . by erosion or plan, is a form of organizational change; but all the problems of managing change are compounded by a scarcity of slack resources."

Charles H. Levine
Cutback Management Specialist

INTRODUCTION TO THE MANUAL

What's In this Book?

This manual is written for Members of Congress, specifically of the U.S. House of Representatives, and their key management staff. (While the concepts discussed also apply to the Senate, because the two Houses allocate resources to personal offices so differently it is not practical to research and advise on both systems in one report.) When we use the pronoun "you" we are referring to any of these principals in a congressional office, or to the management team collectively. The manual is designed to provide congressional managers with three things:

- 1) The first-ever survey of congressional office expenditure patterns to assist veteran offices in evaluating their own expenditures, and to provide guidelines for new offices in developing their initial budgets.
- 2) A shopping list of cost-saving tips collected from scores of congressional offices as well as from interviews with vendors and other knowledgeable sources.
- 3) Tools which can be used to improve planning and budgeting processes in offices experiencing a need for more clarity and precision in these spheres.

It is probably true that congressional managers would have appreciated this type of information had it been available at any time over the previous years. But this year has been a time of particular fiscal stress in which offices have found themselves squeezed between allocation cutbacks on one hand and increased costs on the other. Clearly, providing information on how to effectively cope with this fiscal stress is the most important contribution the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) could make to effective congressional office management at this time.

Survey Results

We conducted an extensive survey of Administrative Assistants and Office Managers in the House of Representatives as part of our research for this manual. Over 100 offices responded with detailed information on their planning and budgeting processes, their expenditure patterns and the cost-saving techniques they have developed over the years. The full results of this survey are found elsewhere in this book and in the Appendix. A few comments on the survey results are appropriate at this point.

- It will come as no surprise that a strong majority of congressional offices were significantly affected by the reductions in clerk-hire allowances and official expense allowances in 1986. The four major areas of cuts already made or anticipated, listed in order of frequency were:
 - Constituent Outreach Mail
 - Legislative Service Organization (LSO) Dues
 - Member Travel to District
 - Subscriptions

These are cuts in what are generally regarded as discretionary spending categories, as opposed to fixed expenses such as rent or equipment lease payments. Each of these cuts are likely to have political or legislative ramifications.

- Perhaps the most interesting finding concerned the methods by which offices dealt with the cuts in clerk hire (salary) funds. A widely used strategy was to transfer additional funds from the official expense account, while deferring or eliminating salary reviews. Though many offices had to make more painful decisions, most appear to have placed a high value on maintaining staff cohesion during this difficult period. However, the most frequent strategy reported was to leave unfilled those staff vacancies which occurred naturally.
- Many offices reported a reduced capacity to upgrade office automation. This puts offices straining under staff reductions or freezes in a double bind. Labor-saving systems could reduce the strain, but also appear out of reach for many at this time.
- A full 30% of responding offices reported inadequate formal planning systems—or no systems at all—to identify priorities around which a budget can be constructed. Only 20% felt their planning

systems were fully adequate. At the same time, 53% of the offices felt their budgeting systems were fully adequate. An interpretation of this apparent discrepancy might be that budgeting is commonly done as a past-oriented, rather than a future-oriented activity. In other words, it may be based on a process of asking, "What did we do last year and how much did that cost?" instead of asking, "What should we really be doing next year?"

- When asked what would best assist offices in improving their planning and budgeting, the greatest response was "better prediction on cost increases," followed by better "prediction on allocation figures." Unfortunately the best political pundits can only guess at the latter. As to the former, approved vendors are required to submit annual cost-increases which are made known to Member offices and committees on the approved equipment list; other cost increases such as travel, rent and telephone rates are, of course, unpredictable in a free market. Meanwhile, 32% of responding offices felt Member clarification of priorities would help significantly, and another 35% felt they would benefit from training on planning and budgeting techniques. This manual will attempt to address both of these perceived needs.
- Finally, nearly 34% of responding offices feel that the resources for assisting them to find more cost-effective means of performing their functions are non-existent or inadequate. If this manual does nothing else, it hopes to make some change in this state of affairs.

INTRODUCTION TO CUTBACK MANAGEMENT — A TERM YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND

If you feel that you're happy with the planning and budgeting procedures your office uses, skip the chapters on those subjects. But don't skip this chapter.

Cutback management in the public sector is a new field; you're unlikely to have heard much about it on the Hill up till now. Understanding the distinct dynamics of an organization under fiscal stress may make a significant contribution to your success in managing your office in the 100th Congress.

BACKGROUND — FISCAL STRESS SYNDROME

Historically, government at all levels in the U.S. steadily expanded for many decades. This changed in the 1970s in the wake of such phenomena as Proposition 13 in California and the near-bankruptcy of New York City. For the first time, many state and local agencies found themselves with reduced resources, sometimes in the face of increased demand for services. This produced a unique set of stresses which challenged public sector managers.

Researchers observed that the affected organizations often went through a series of stages, not unlike the stages an individual experiences when confronted with a personal crisis such as a major accident or the discovery that he or she has a serious degenerative disease. The stages generally observed in a "fiscal crisis syndrome" include:

- **INITIAL SHOCK** — disbelief that the cutbacks would really be enacted, disbelief that they would continue or become deeper, staff anxiety as to what the personal consequences of the cutbacks would mean, and a lively level of rumor in the organization.
- **WITHDRAWAL** — Management retreat to a more rigid, centralized decision-making mode from which to issue a series of restrictive spending regulations and harsh layoff decisions; staff withdrawal into the private investigation of contingency plans to preempt a sudden "axing."
- **COPING** — Managers embroiled in time-consuming meetings regarding unanticipated dilemmas and conflicts, complications arising from the original "injury" and its debilitating effects; staff involved in increased grievance activity and non-team activities to protect self.
- **ADJUSTMENT** — Learning to live with the remaining effects of the trauma, the reduced capabilities, the scaled-down expectations — or the innovative approaches to doing old things in new ways.

Managers often find themselves ill-prepared to deal with the phenomena accompanying budge-

tary cutbacks. They find decline harder to handle than expansion. It has been observed that Americans in particular are very uncomfortable with decline and consider it to somehow represent failure, instead of perceiving it as part of a natural cycle or as a correcting mechanism. The impulse to "desert a sinking ship" often grips both managers and their staffs, adding further stress to the situation.

CONSEQUENCES FOR HUMAN RESOURCES

In periods of economic growth, there are ample rewards to spread around for effective performance, hard work and loyalty. In periods of budgetary cutbacks such tangible rewards are often severely limited or simply unavailable. Yet at the same time, staff are typically being asked to bear extra burdens to compensate for reductions in personnel.

The most talented staff in the public sector are always aware of more lucrative opportunities which exist for them in the private sector. When they are faced with the prospect of successive years of pay freezes, or even pay reductions, the temptation to respond to private sector overtures becomes stronger.

Public organizations must be able to retain skilled staff and attract new talent willing to invest their time and energy at the expense of other opportunities. Congressional offices have never had problems attracting an excess of qualified applicants, but many, even in "good times," have had trouble retaining staff. A survey conducted in the early eighties revealed a startling 40% turnover annual rate in congressional offices. However, much of this turnover occurred at lower echelons which did not affect institutional memory too adversely. The prospect of major turnover at senior echelons is, and should be worrisome to a Member of Congress.

Lessons have been learned in other public sector organizations experiencing cutbacks which may benefit congressional offices and, if applied, could soften the adverse impact on their human resources.

It is not just the lack of financial rewards which breeds turnover. The ways in which cutbacks are managed also greatly affect staff commitment. Because of the tendency to centralize the decision-making process, to make the tough decisions of what to cut and who to let go behind closed doors, it is all too easy for an atmosphere of job insecurity and staff cynicism to emerge. But in many cases, this can be avoided if managers understand the dynamics at work.

THE BURDEN OF MANAGEMENT IN CUTBACK PERIODS

Managers face a particularly heavy burden during periods of cutback. It is far easier to manage effectively, and to be perceived to be managing effectively, when you can give staff much of what they reasonably want — whether this is a more efficient piece of equipment, a redefined job description which unloads some of their routine onto a new staff member, or a merit pay increase. Often you can't do any of these things in a period of budgetary cutbacks.

Instead, you may find yourself in the unenviable position of having to take away equipment, add chores to a job description which the staffer is over-qualified to perform, and announce that there will be no bonuses or salary reviews, or even that the staff will suffer salary cuts.

You often find yourself caught between a rock and a hard place as a "cutback manager." Do you "spread the pain around" by making decremental cuts across the entire budget (including salaries) or do you play judge and executioner, dictating which activities and staff will "live" and which will "die?"

And suppose you are usually committed to a participatory management style in which you include all echelons of staff in the planning process. How do you do this, when the planning focuses on cuts which must be made "from the hides" of those present?

In addition to grappling with such thorny issues, you, already a very busy individual, find yourself spending an inordinate amount of time in meetings to plan the cutbacks or to resolve conflicts or dilemmas resulting from them.

Even more disturbingly, you may be experiencing personal financial stress due to the cutbacks.

The raise you were counting on won't materialize this year. In fact, it's difficult to envision it occurring for several years. What are you personally going to do?

Unfortunately, there are no easy answers to these questions. But there are options which carry with them varying consequences. There are better ways and poorer ways to approach these issues. We hope this manual will sensitize you to the choices you have.

To some degree, the right choice for your office will depend on how deep the cutbacks are and how long they are likely to continue. This question will be examined further in section III of this manual.

There is one bright side to this picture. It has been found that many organizations in periods of fiscal stress are more receptive to the introduction of improved management practices which they might not otherwise have accepted. There is real opportunity for a manager to achieve gains in both efficiency and effectiveness. If this is done well enough, it is even possible to improve office morale, despite the other forces mitigating against it.

There is another compelling reason for you to take advantage of a climate which may permit the introduction of new planning and decision-making techniques. Under conditions of less financial stringency, habit, intuition, off-the-cuff judgments and other forms of management "by the seat of your pants" may suffice. If you make a mistake, you have the resources to compensate for it. This is less true in an era of financial austerity. It's more important that you're "right" the first time.

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES?

In 1986, when Members came back from Christmas recess, they found their AAs reeling under the news that their 1986 official expense funds had been cut by 4.3% and their clerk-hire funds reduced by 10.2%. Worse, it was already one quarter into the fiscal year. Offices had been spending at the higher rate for three months and now had to achieve this level of savings in a nine-month period.

Apparently, Members had not appreciated that the cutbacks mandated by the passage of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings bill would apply to the legislative branch and ultimately to their own office operations.

The news of the reductions was so unpredicted and required such immediate cuts that it amply fulfilled the definition of a shock and initiated the cycle described earlier, analogous to the stages found in a personal crisis syndrome.

Each office dealt with the shock in its own way, depending on a variety of factors. These included: how closely their predicted annual expenditures came to their original allocation level, the Member's style, the flexibility they had to move staff temporarily onto campaign payroll, whether they could return equipment and reduce phone lines, and a host of other factors. Frankly, some took advantage of the situation to dismiss staff, or to close down district offices which were actions they could not previously have taken for political reasons. But virtually all took out a red pen, or a green cursor, and began making cuts to their existing budgets which did not require any fundamental rethinking of their game plans. Given the suddenness with which they had to act, there was hardly any other option.

When this activity was more or less completed, the BIG question became, now what? What happens October 1st? Estimates of cuts as high as 27% were being bandied about. With some exceptions, most offices experienced the first cut as painful, not disastrous, as fat-trimming rather than bone-shattering. 27% or 20% or even 15% cuts would be quite a different matter. And that is right — the strategies for shallow cuts and deep cuts must be quite different.

Research has shown that if expenditure cuts are less than 7% of the total budget in any given year, or less than 15% over a three-year period, piecemeal, decremental cuts can be made without destroying the long-term effectiveness of the organization. If cuts are outside these margins, a downward spiral of events is often triggered which may seriously reduce effectiveness, unless quite a different strategy is employed in making the cuts.

This manual is being written while the 99th Congress is preparing for summer recess. When it comes off the press in October, with its ink still wet, the final fate of the FY '87 legislative appropriation will have just been decided. Our task here is to help prepare you to better cope with whatever scenario emerges.

1987 AND BEYOND

The House has just passed a bill calling for a 3.7 percent increase in legislative funding for 1987. However, current best-guesses are that the deficit-reduction targets mandated by the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings act will not be met and that sequestration will occur, though these guesses also anticipate that deficit-reduction efforts may come close to the targets. This would mean that the amount of funds sequestered will not be great, in the grand scheme of things. If this scenario proves correct, congressional offices will enjoy more or less the same amount of funds as they have learned to live with this year. In that case, you can probably flip to Section II of this book, the cost-cutting tips section, go through it to find ten good ideas for trimming a little bit here and there to compensate for inflation, and you'll be able to struggle through without serious consequences.

Or will you? Perhaps next year several key staff will announce they just can't continue without appropriate pay raises (above Cost of Living Adjustments, whose fate, at this writing, also hangs in the balance) or the Member will have received a real scare at the polls and decide he or she must have a more aggressive, well-defined incumbency program and image. In these cases, decremental cutting is probably not the right answer for you.

And if the pundits are wrong, and you again experience cutbacks of the magnitude sustained last year, you almost certainly need to employ the new strategies. The "15%" threshold mentioned above would have been crossed in two years instead of three. For that matter, just a 4% or 5% cut in '87, if repeated in the second session of the 100th Congress, would also cross this threshold.

Though it is difficult, we must try to retain the long range view. The budget deficit cuts mandated by Gramm-Rudman-Hollings will be steeper each year, until 1991. Even if the cuts are suspended for a year or two as provided for in the event of recession and the reduced tax revenues recession would bring, it is unlikely that absolute spending levels would again increase in this time period. The realistic scenario for the rest of the decade at least is no-growth or diminishing budgetary allocations for your office.

Are you and all your staff willing or able to work under these conditions if they translate to no-growth or diminishing personal take-home pay?

Equally important, will you be able to cope with the added demands your constituents are likely to put on you? Most federal agencies will simultaneously sustain budget cuts of their own. This will probably result, at least initially, in service reductions to the public. Constituents, finding themselves unsatisfied with responses from the various agencies, will often turn to you for help. After all, you've been encouraging them to do this for years! Will you be able to effectively process 50% or 30% or even 20% more casework with the same or less staff and equipment, without a fundamental review of your strategies to acquire, allocate and utilize resources?

If you don't envision your office easily coping with these types of situations in two or three years, then you should probably begin reviewing your office's strategies, assumptions and procedures this year when you may only be feeling "squeezed" rather than "squashed."

What will be of greatest value to you at this point will be to review, revitalize and restrategize the sense of mission in your office. Use this economic crunch (which demands ever more difficult trade-offs) to clarify or redefine the core mission of the office. Do this in a way which involves and interests your staff — translate this into pared-down, but vital functional priorities and a leaner budget which permits growth and reward in this narrower, core sphere of activity. Frankly, this is very tough to do, but if you start now you will have enough time to learn the processes and pitfalls and to make the transition to 1991 as smoothly as possible.

SECTION I

CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE SPENDING PATTERNS

OFFICIAL EXPENSE ACCOUNT EXPENDITURE PATTERNS

This section of the manual graphically displays some of the expenditure patterns determined by CMF's recent survey of congressional offices.

113 offices responded to the survey within the cutoff date. Some of the responses omitted data in one or more categories, which meant they could not be utilized in tabulating all sections of this report. Each of the overall graphs are based on approximately 90 responses.

In order to make the information as relevant as possible to your office, we have also reported spending patterns for geographically similar subsets of House offices. In most cases this still permitted reliable sample sizes. In one or two cases this sample size is somewhat lower than it should be for reliability, especially for districts more than 2000 miles from Washington.

At the end of this section of the manual there are instructions for grouping your office's expenditures or budget projections into the spending categories reported here. This will enable you to compare your office's patterns with the normal patterns for similar offices.

In the last part of this manual we discuss in some detail how you can use this comparison to help identify potential cost-saving actions. One simple measure you can take is to review the cost-saving tips in Section II. If your expenditures in any category are high compared with other offices, this will help you to determine if there are any immediate cost-saving actions you should explore. The cost-saving tips are listed by the same categories reported on the graphs to facilitate this process.

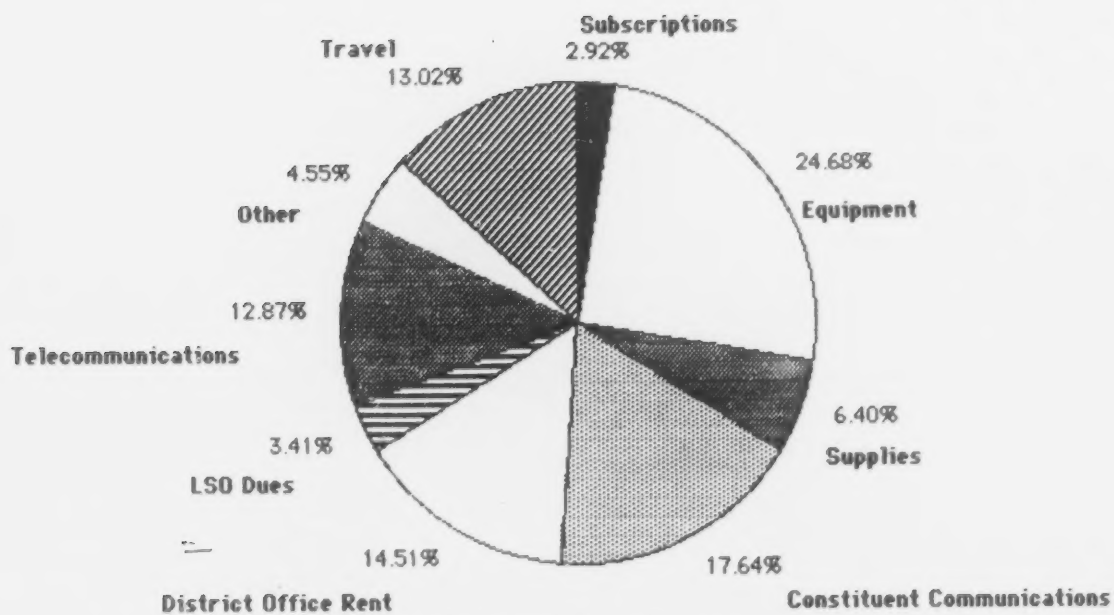
A few interesting observations can be made from an examination of the graphs:

- Telecommunications expenses are fairly constant across geographic categories.
- Constituent communication expenses are fairly constant across all geographic categories except for offices located three thousand miles or more from Washington, presumably because these districts tend to have smaller populations.
- Offices 2000 miles or more from Washington commit more funds to office equipment. Their larger official expense allocations apparently afford them the flexibility to do this.
- Offices 2000 miles or more from Washington spend more funds on district rent. This may be due to the fact that these districts are often very large, requiring more offices to provide easy access for constituents. Also, as the distance from Washington limits the frequency of Member visits to the district, it may be felt that more offices are needed to maintain a presence.
- Suburban districts use a greater percentage of their total expenditures for office rent than do offices in urban districts. This may partially be explained by the fact that urban district offices are often in less affluent, inner-city locations. Rural district office rents are lowest.
- Members from rural districts, regardless of distance from Washington, use almost twice the percentage of their total expenditure for travel as do Members from urban districts. Travel within districts with dispersed populations appears to significantly affect expenditure patterns.
- Offices with marginal election situations use about 5% more of their total expenditures for constituent communications, but do not spend appreciably more on travel to and within the district.

The following graphs display average spending patterns. These do not imply that every office SHOULD follow these patterns. But they are a tool for returning offices to assess where they MAY be spending more than they need to and for new offices to predict what they are LIKELY to spend.

It should be kept in mind that official expense allocations in 1985 varied from \$105,513 to \$306,509. The average allocation was \$147,588. In addition, each office may transfer \$40,000 between official expenses and clerk hire. Because of these variables, there is no fully satisfactory method of grouping and reporting on offices. Nevertheless, the following charts do display some meaningful relationships worth studying.

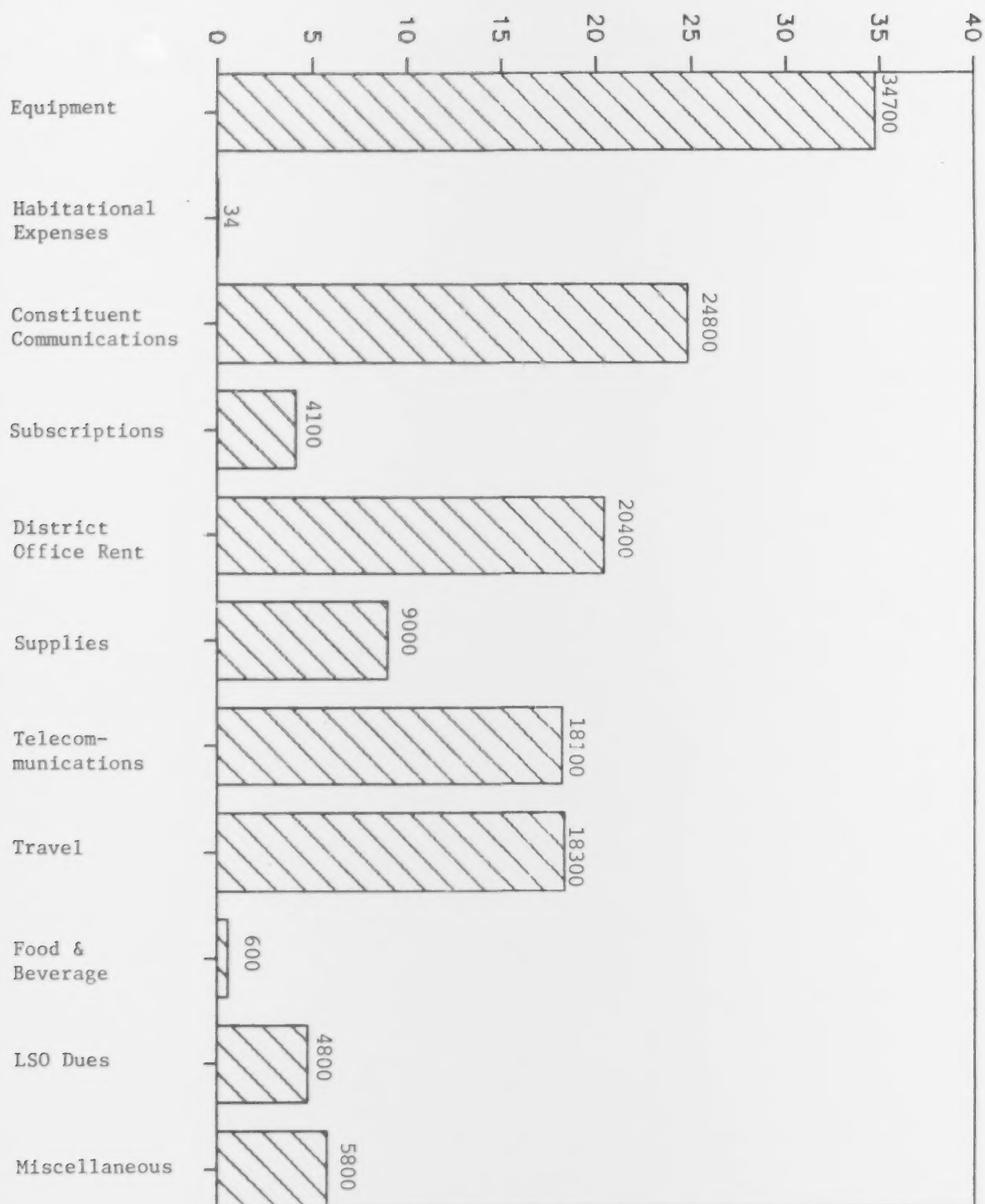
EXPENDITURES BY GEOGRAPHICAL DISTANCE



AVERAGE EXPENSES FOR ALL OFFICES

AVERAGE EXPENSES FOR ALL OFFICES

(Thousands)



AVERAGE EXPENSES BY DISTRICT LOCATION

UNDER 500 MILES

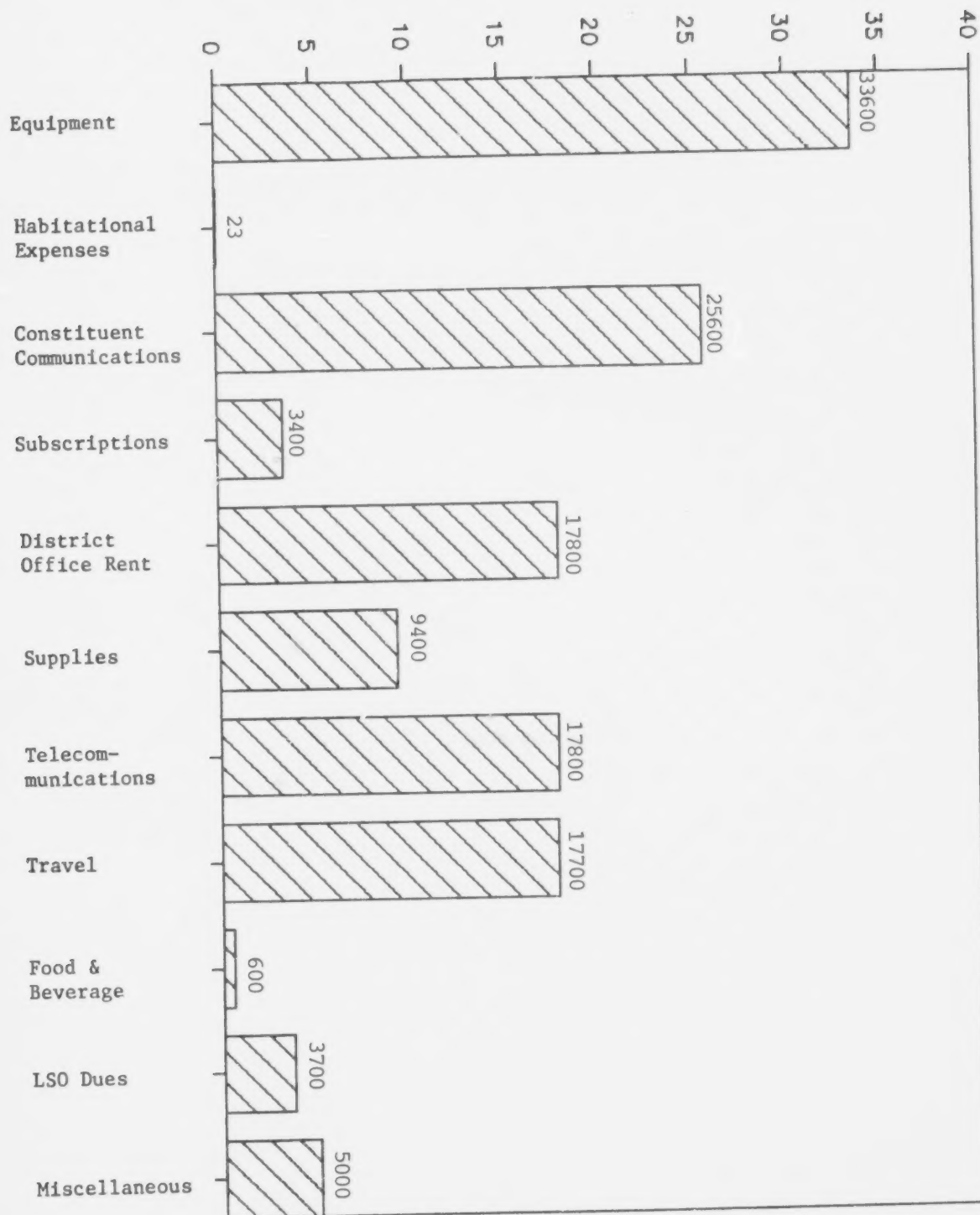
(Thousands)



AVERAGE EXPENSES BY DISTRICT LOCATION

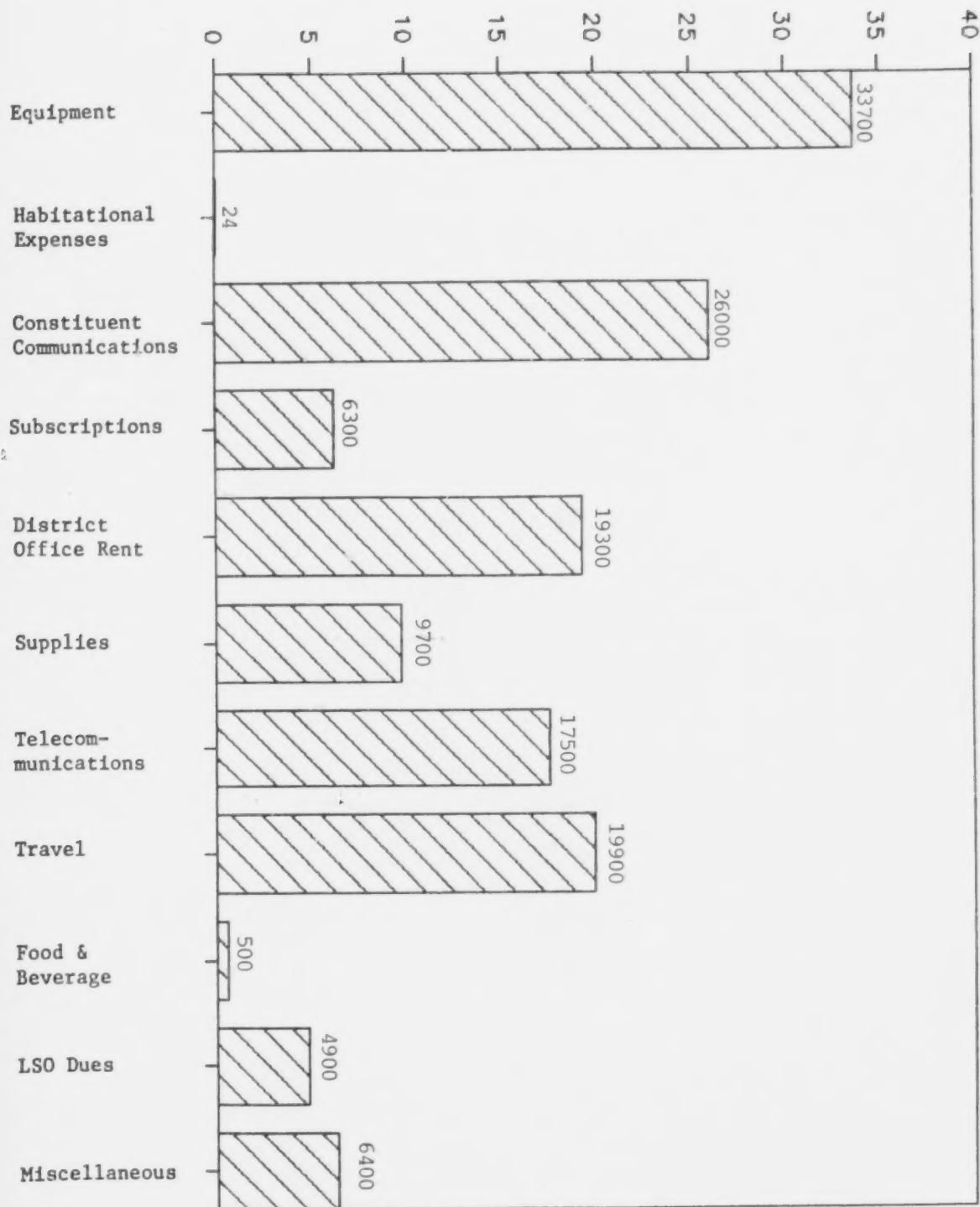
500-1000 MILES

(Thousands)

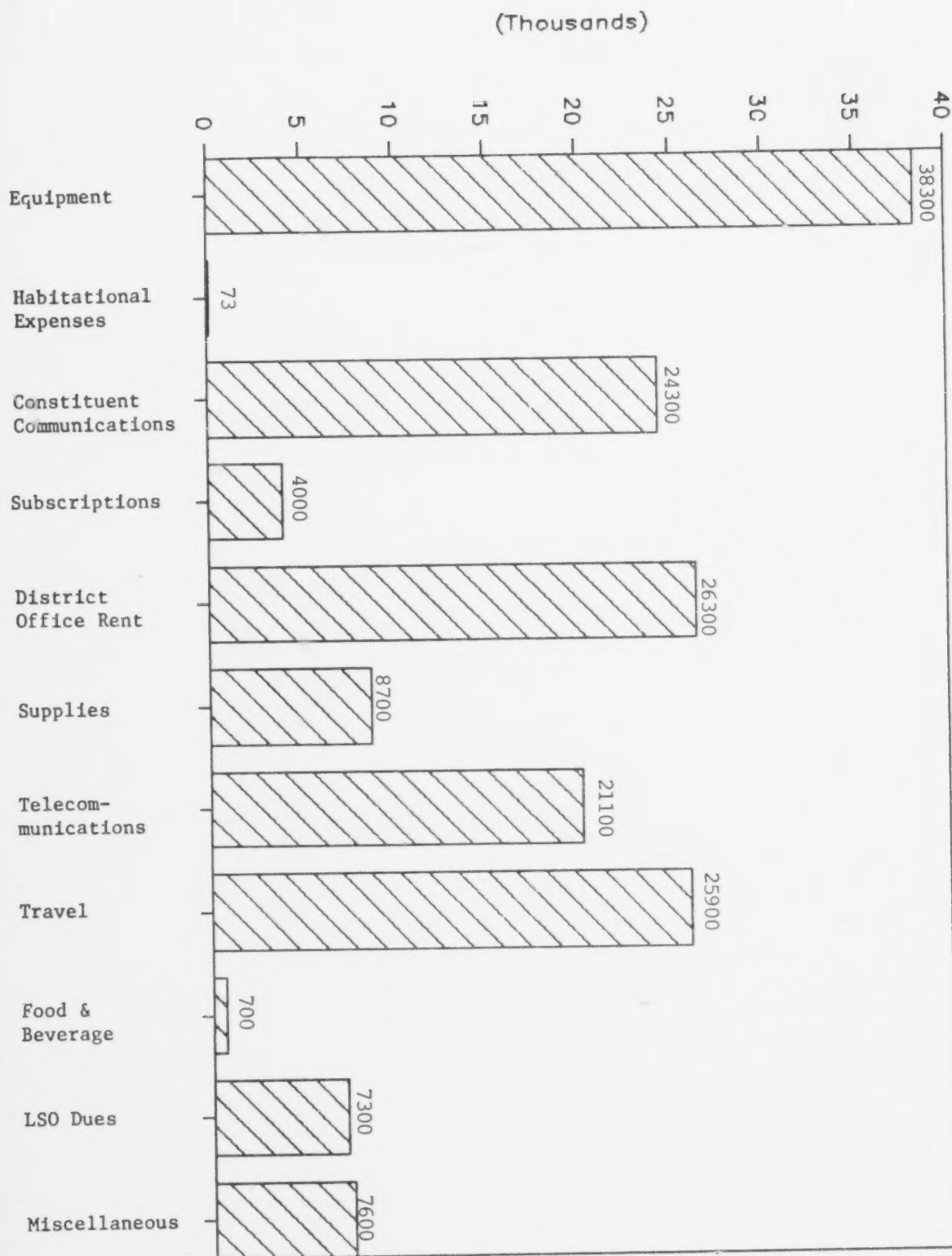


AVERAGE EXPENSES BY DISTRICT LOCATION 1000-2000 MILES

(Thousands)



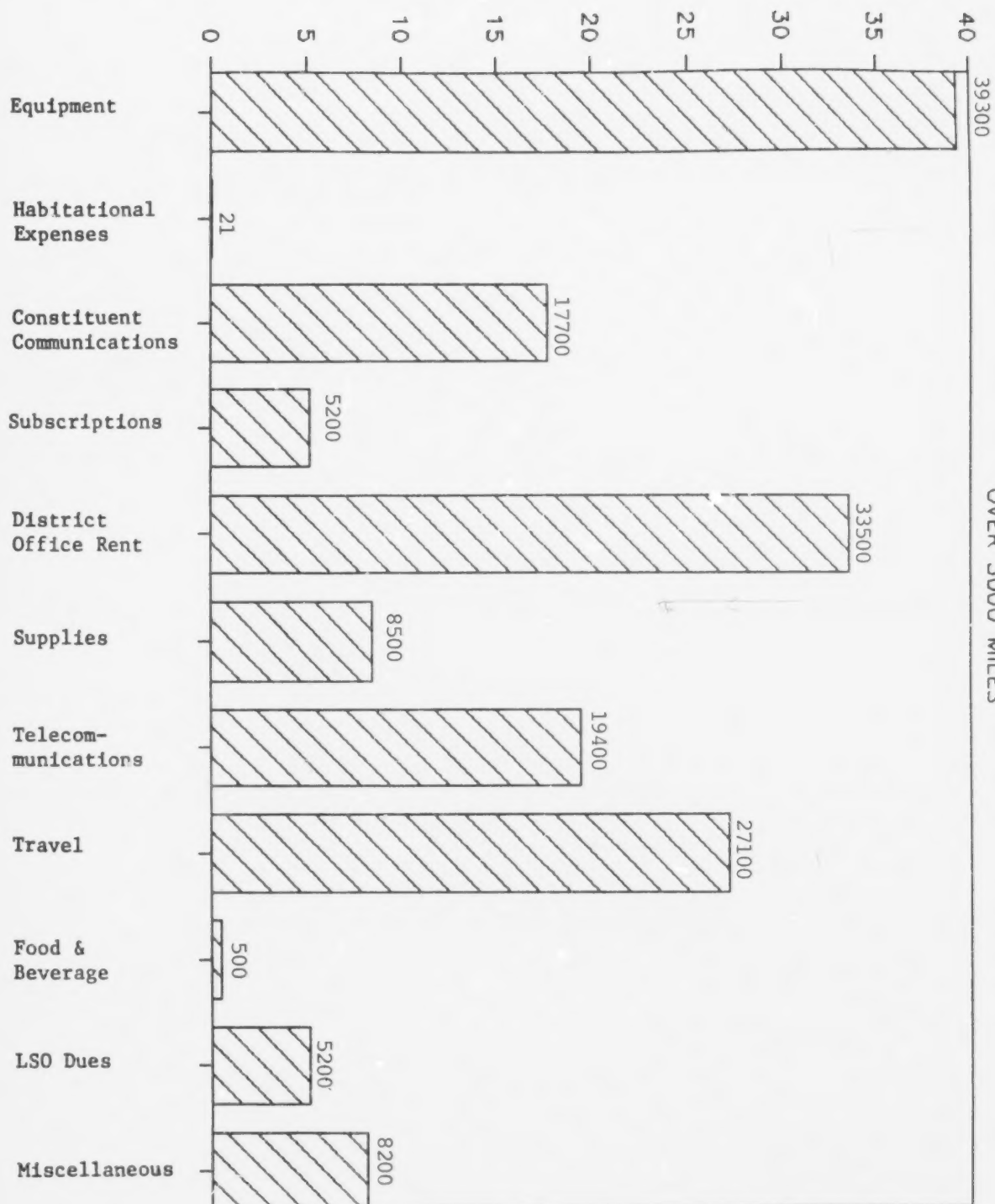
AVERAGE EXPENSES BY DISTRICT LOCATION 2000-3000 MILES



AVERAGE EXPENSES BY DISTRICT LOCATION

OVER 3000 MILES

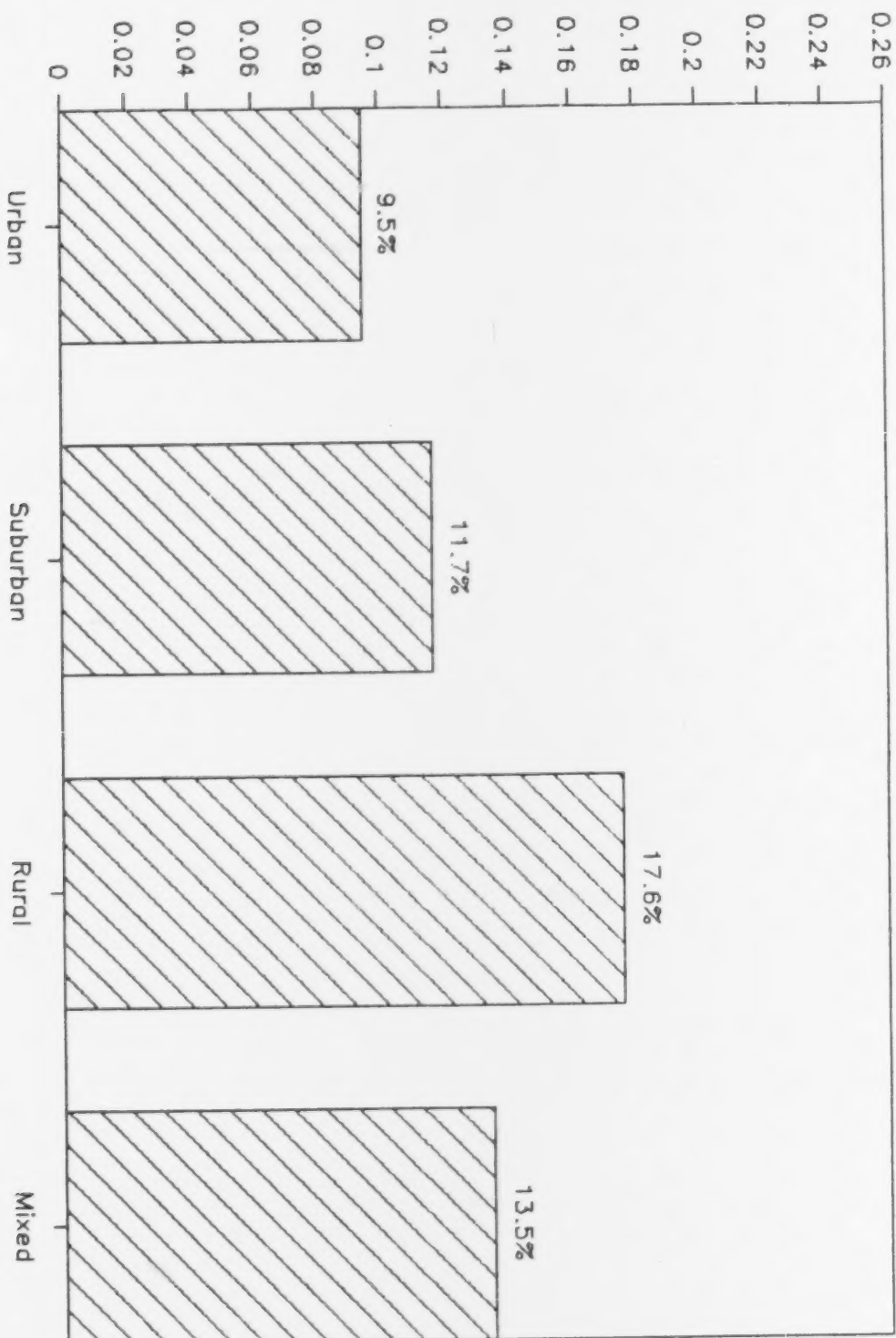
(Thousands)



EXPENDITURES BY TYPE OF DISTRICT

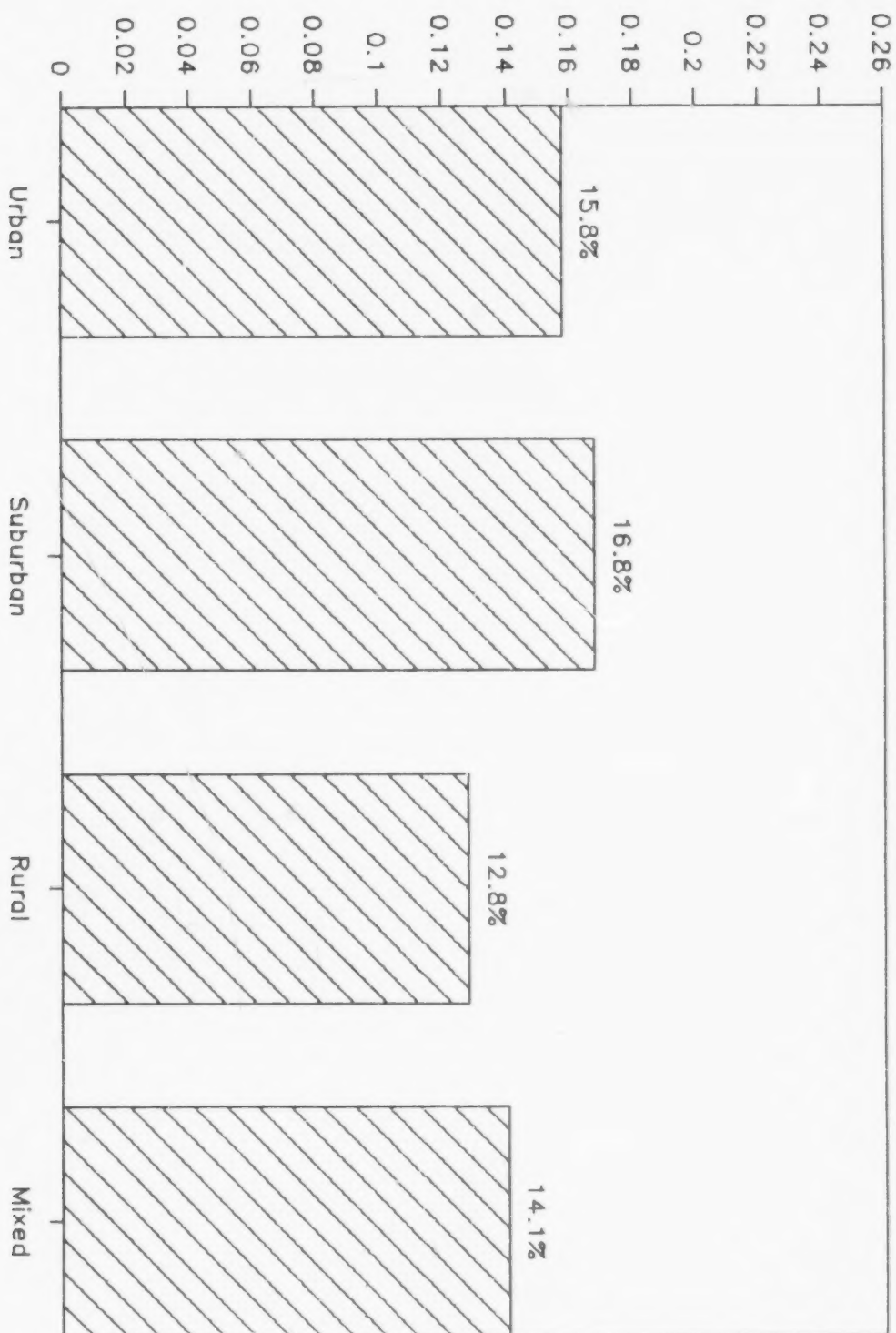
TRAVEL BY DISTRICT TYPE

AS % OF AVERAGE TOTAL EXPENDITURES



DISTRICT OFFICE RENT BY DISTRICT TYPE

AS % OF AVERAGE TOTAL EXPENDITURES

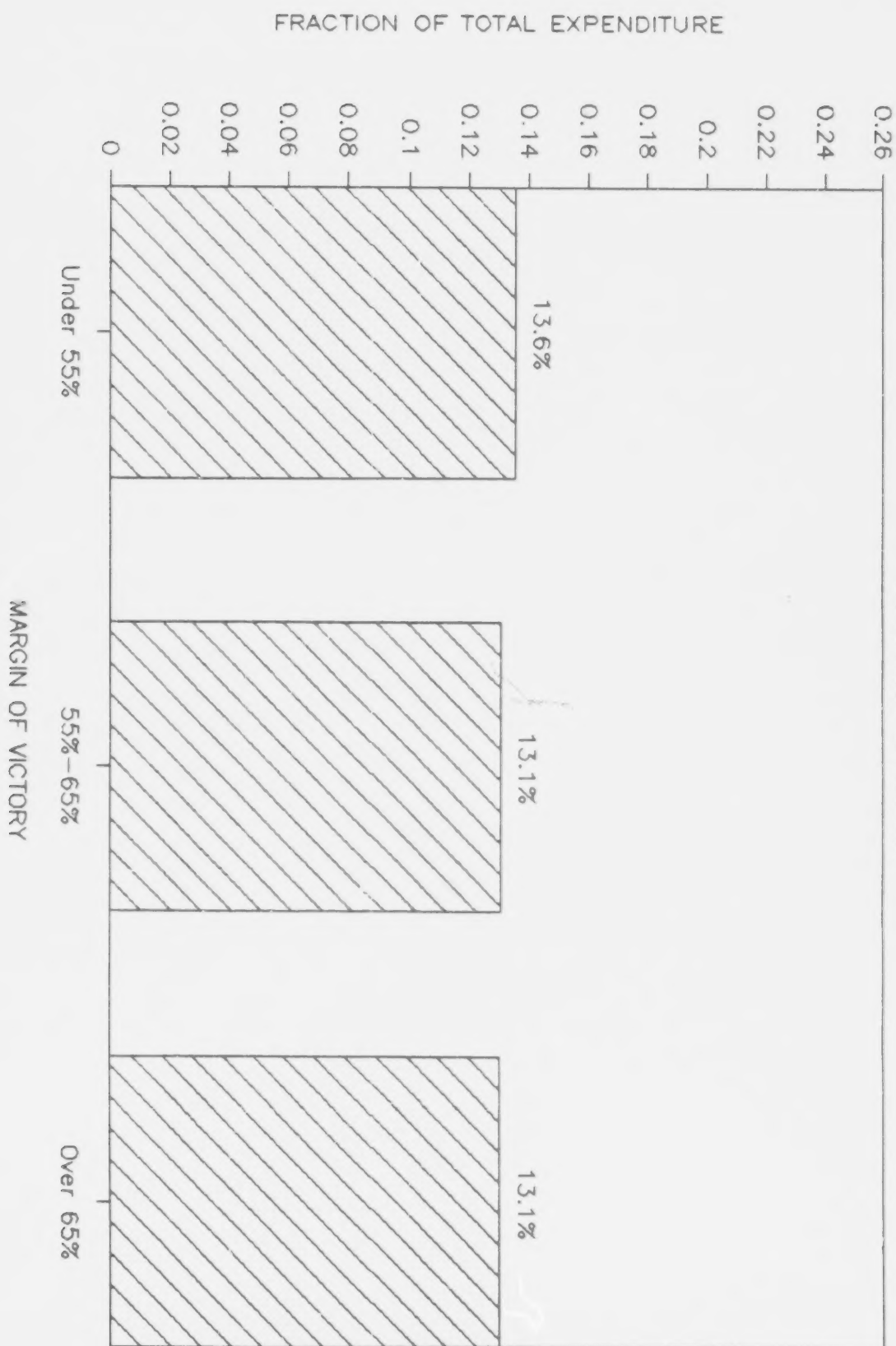


EXPENDITURES BY MARGINALITY

AVERAGE CONST COMMUNCTN EXPENDITURE BY MARGIN OF VICTORY



AVERAGE TRAVEL EXPENDITURE BY MARGIN OF VICTORY



The preceding graphs are of interest, but their full value is realized only when you construct your own office expenditure graph to compare to the relevant geographical or political profiles. In order to do this, you need to know how we assigned expenditures to the various categories.

Below is a list of categories the Finance Office uses to advise you of your monthly expenditures. In the right-hand column we have listed the categories within which we have grouped these, after consultation with various AAs and Office Managers.

Office Equipment Charge	Equipment
Equipment Purchase, Lease or Maintenance	Equipment
Habitational Expenses	Habitational
Constituent Communication	Constituent Communications
Publications and Subscriptions	Subscriptions
District Office Rent (Federal)	District Office Rent
District Office Rent (Private)	District Office Rent
Official Expenses	Miscellaneous
District Office Telephone	Telecommunications
Member/Office Travel	Travel
Staff Travel	Travel
Computer Service	Constituent Communications
Postage	Constituent Communications
Photographic Expenses	Constituent Communications
Office Supplies Charge	Supplies
Food and Beverage (Non-Travel)	Food & Beverage
Member in District Transportation Expenses	Travel
Member in District Travel Related Expenses	Travel
Staff in District Transportation Expenses	Travel
Staff in District Travel Related Expenses	Travel
Calendars	Constituent Communications
Recording Charges	Constituent Communications
Equipment Repairs	Equipment
Washington, D.C. Toll Calls	Telecommunications
Washington, D.C. Local Telephone Service	Telecommunications
Telegraph Expenses	Telecommunications
FTS	Telecommunications
H.I.S. Computer Reimbursements	Subscriptions
Official Photographic Charge	Constituent Communications
LSO (Legislative Service Organization) Dues	LSO Dues
District Telephone Equipment	Telecommunications
District Office Telephone Tolls	Telecommunications
D.C. Telephone Equipment	Telecommunications
Reference Materials	Subscriptions
Reproduction of Private and Public Laws	Subscriptions

WORKSHEET FOR GRAPHING YOUR OFFICE'S EXPENDITURES

In order to work out your own expenditure pattern for 1985, take your last Finance Office official expense summary for 1985 (usually received April or May 1986) and transfer the figures from each line onto the following form:

Equipment:

Office Equipment Charge
Equipment Purchase, Lease or Maintenance
Equipment Repairs
TOTAL EQUIPMENT EXPENSE \$

Habitational:

HABITATIONAL EXPENSES \$

Constituent Communications:

Constituent Communication
Computer Service
Postage
Photographic Expenses
Calendars
Recording Charges
Official Photographic Charge
TOTAL CONSTITUENT COMMUNICATIONS EXPENSE \$

Subscriptions:

Publications and Subscriptions
H.I.S. Computer Reimbursements
Reference Materials
Reproduction of Private and Public Laws
TOTAL SUBSCRIPTIONS EXPENSE \$

District Office Rent:

District Office Rent (Federal)
District Office Rent (Private)
TOTAL DISTRICT OFFICE RENT EXPENSE \$

Supplies:

OFFICE SUPPLIES CHARGE \$

Telecommunication:

District Office Telephone
Washington, D.C. Toll Calls
Washington, D.C. Local Telephone Service
Telegraph Expenses
FTS
District Telephone Equipment
District Office Telephone Tolls
D.C. Telephone Equipment
TOTAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS EXPENSE \$

Travel:

Member/Office Travel
Staff Travel
Member in District Transportation Expenses
Member in District Travel Related Expenses
Staff in District Transportation Expenses
Staff in District Travel Related Expenses
TOTAL TRAVEL EXPENSE \$

Food and Beverage:

FOOD AND BEVERAGE (NON-TRAVEL) \$

LSO Dues:

LSO (LEGISLATIVE SERVICE ORGANIZATION) DUES \$

Miscellaneous:

OFFICIAL EXPENSES \$ _____

TO DOUBLECHECK YOUR FIGURES, ADD UP ALL THE CATEGORY TOTALS. IF CORRECT, THESE SHOULD ADD UP TO THE "PAID TO DATE" FIGURE ON YOUR 1985 OFFICIAL EXPENSE SUMMARY.

CATEGORY TOTALS:

Equipment Expense	\$ _____
Habitational Expense	\$ _____
Constituent Communications	\$ _____
Subscriptions	\$ _____
District Office Rent	\$ _____
Supplies	\$ _____
Telecommunications	\$ _____
Travel	\$ _____
Food and Beverage	\$ _____
LSO Dues	\$ _____
Miscellaneous	\$ _____

SUM OF CATEGORIES \$ _____

WILL EQUAL PAID
TO DATE FIGURE \$ _____

You can now construct your own bar graph and compare it to the relevant graphs for your office. You can also approximate your future budget projections for each category to get a general idea of your anticipated spending patterns.

SECTION II

COST-SAVING TIPS FOR CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES

The suggestions contained in this section do not comprise an exhaustive or official list of cost-saving actions. They represent input from Administrative Assistants, Office Managers, and congressional office vendors.

If you have any questions about appropriate official and representational uses of your allowances, we encourage you to contact the House Administration Committee or the Finance Office. Any cost-saving actions employed must, of course, fall within House regulations and conform to relevant statutes.

The applicability of any given suggestion in this section will depend largely on the style, mission, goals and systems of each office. We recommend that the AA or Office Manager read the entire list and that relevant staff read at least the section pertaining to their areas of responsibility to identify tips which may be applicable to each office. In section III of this manual you will find exercises to help you develop further cost-saving actions for your own office. We would like to thank all those who shared suggestions. We hope every office will find some tips worth considering.

EQUIPMENT

- Evaluate equipment inventory regularly — return non-essential equipment on which no commitment remains.
- Place unneeded equipment with remaining commitment on the Office Equipment Surplus list — perhaps another office can use it. Advertise it with a "Dear Colleague."
- If you need equipment, examine the Surplus Equipment List — it may be a good opportunity to get equipment on a trial basis.
- Before buying new equipment, first use it on at least a 30 day trial period to be sure it serves your purposes.
- Consider sharing equipment such as signature machines with another office. Send a "Dear Colleague" to determine interest.
- Share a copy machine with an adjoining office. Two offices could afford a machine which is better than either could afford individually.
- Several PC's and one printer may cost less than the same number of memory typewriters.
- Change lease agreements for vital equipment to a one or two year lease program or a three year procurement plan. Weigh the cost-saving benefits against the trade-off of locking yourself into equipment which rapidly antiquates as new technology is developed.
- Take advantage of one-time purchase options when funds are available. Again, weigh the cost-saving advantages against the trade-off of eventual obsolescence.
- If you have any remaining GSA allotment, buy district office equipment that is still being leased — have it assigned to GSA district office equipment inventory which will eliminate a monthly expense from your Official Expense account.
- Consider a laser printer. Despite its higher cost, it saves in ribbons, manhours, and does not use high-priced continuous form letterhead.
- Consider implementing "neutral" work stations (centrally located equipment) reducing the amount of computer terminals or typewriters the office needs.
- Periodically examine the Surplus Inventory list. You may find lower priced equipment similar to that which you are currently using.
- If you are thinking about modifying your computer system, request that H.I.S. conduct a free analysis and suggest options.
- Consider the Special Official Expenses Computer Software package developed by HIS. It is designed specifically for congressional offices and can assist in developing a cost-saving budget. (It only runs on IBM compatible hardware — if your office lacks this, you may be able to use H.I.S. training equipment when available).
- Before buying extra disk storage capacity, review your constituent database to determine if you need to retain it all. Deleting or revising some lists may eliminate the need for extra disk storage capacity.
- A great deal of printing can be done in the evening or early morning hours, making it unnecessary to have more than one printer.
- Do not buy extra computer disk capacity until it is needed. Upgrade in increments (ideally, in the smallest possible increments).

CONSTITUENT COMMUNICATION

COMPUTER SERVICE

- If you are using an on-line service, review it regularly to make sure you really need all the connect-time you have contracted for.
- If you are using an on-line service, use dual access only when absolutely necessary. When possible, use dual-access by the hour rather than on an unlimited basis. If you are currently using unlimited dual-access, record how much you use in a month to determine whether you really require unlimited time.
- Rather than using a great deal of dual access or unlimited service, use a PC terminal for daily work and then dump the data into the on-line service at the end of the day.

NEWSLETTERS

- A major determinant of newsletter cost is page size. Consult your printer for the optimum size page to meet your needs while reducing costs.
- Before deciding to send out a questionnaire, consider the cost of data entry, tabulation, and follow-up — it can sometimes cost more than two regular newsletters.
- Use 50 pound offset paper for newsletters. 75 pound offset is needed only for newsletters with sections to be clipped and returned. 50 pound paper can be used even then, if constituents use their own envelopes.
- Limit newsletters to two pages instead of four — cut out non-essential material. Sending one four-page legal newsletter costs the same as sending three two-page legal newsletters.
- Proper preparation can save significant typesetting costs. Use a word processor to prepare camera-ready copy. Submit the newsletter to the Member and Franking Commission before taking it to the printer to avoid costly changes.

TOWN HALL MEETING NOTICES

- The least expensive Town Hall Meeting card size is 4 1/4" x 5 1/2". 75 lb. offset is the standard. 60 pound stock still meets folding room requirements.
- List a number of Town Hall meetings on one card; it saves money, provides more options for people to attend, and presents the image of a hard-working Member.

PRINTING

- One color printing jobs of less than five thousand pieces can often be done more cheaply on your photocopier than by an outside printing firm.
- Solicit a number of bids for large printing jobs.
- Avoid using a second color for newsletters. It costs 12-33% more depending on size.
- Recycled paper is more expensive than regular paper.
- To apply the Member's name to office calendars and maps for constituents, affix gummed labels rather than printing on them directly.
- Return a portion of the yearly agriculture yearbooks allotment to credit your GPO account.
- Cut back on distribution of specially printed Washington maps. Use generic maps rather than high-priced Member maps.

CONSTITUENT COMMUNICATION (continued)

MAILING

- Limit responses to out-of-district mail.
- Use pre-printed postcards and labels to advise constituents that their casework letter has been received and that investigation has been initiated.
- Consider not answering postcards. If you do answer postcards, accumulate them by issue and answer them at regular intervals. Consider using pre-printed postcards acknowledging receipt of a postcard.
- If "labor" in the district is cheaper than in Washington, answer more mail in the district.
- Postal patron mailings cost less than large targeted mailings. They avoid the costs involved in entering and maintaining extensive mailing lists though they sacrifice personalization.
- When sending updates to constituents who have expressed interest on a specific issue, use photocopies and labels instead of personalized letters.
- Send postal patron updates to specific areas, incorporating Town Meeting notices, etc., rather than sending only district-wide postal patrons.
- Be persistent in asking the Post Office for accurate postal patron counts. Accurate figures could save you thousands in unnecessary printing costs.
- When traveling to the district, Member and staff should consider taking requested materials with them to the district to save on delivery services.
- Send Mailgrams or Express Mail instead of telegrams. Some overnight delivery services such as DHL have special government rates which represent a considerable savings over the standard rates.

TELECOMMUNICATION

- Closely evaluate the need for all Washington and district phone lines.
- Communicate between Washington and district offices by computer, reducing long-distance usage and, in some cases, the need for an extra WATS line.
- If one of the district offices lacks FTS service, another district office with FTS should check with that office regularly to relay messages to Washington.
- Use a toggle switch to attach several pieces of equipment to a single phone line.
- The Member should use the WATS extender while in the DC area.
- When receiving a collect or an 800 number call, immediately ask for the number and call back on FTS or WATS.
- When receiving a long distance call from the Member or from a staffer which is not being placed from the district office, get the number and call back on the WATS line.
- Use WATS and FTS lines to connect facsimile machines and computer lines to the district office.
- Conference calls to major district newspapers and radio stations may reduce the necessity for frequent Member travel to the district.
- Use BIU (Bus Interface Unit) to access H.I.S. mainframes. It does not require a modem and phone line, allows access from district offices over Public Data Network, and runs faster than a conventional hook-up. (Check with H.I.S. for details).
- Make it office policy to only use WATS or FTS lines to make long-distance calls.
- Place a sign near phones which visitors are likely to use saying, "local calls only."

DISTRICT OFFICE RENT

- Sometimes state and local governments make free office space available to Members of Congress. Look into this possibility and clear any offers with the committee on Standards of Official Conduct.
- Sharing a district office may be feasible in cities divided into several congressional districts.
- Attempt to negotiate in your lease a low rate for utilities charges thus locking in the full costs for the office.
- Private space is often cheaper to rent than federal office space and is often more accessible on weekends.
- Instead of maintaining several full-time satellite district offices, hold regular weekly office hours in several locations in the district, using the same person to staff each one.

OFFICE SUPPLIES

- Cut back on non-essential items. Use scrap paper for note pads instead of using House of Representatives pads.
- Buy in bulk, especially when buying letterhead and continuous form paper.
- If there is a chance your office will be moving, be wary of buying large quantities of anything with the office address printed on it.
- Take advantage of the Public Document Envelope Account to acquire free envelopes. These can also be overprinted (e.g. Address Correction Requested) very inexpensively.
- At the end of the fiscal year, use unexpended funds to purchase heavily used office supplies, especially newsletter paper.
- Let inventory levels sink to a bare minimum before reordering.
- Keep strict controls on purchasing. Leave office supply cards in the control of one person; allow only one person to order supplies.
- Make it office policy that staff conserve and re-use materials such as folders, rubber bands and paper clips.
- Some office supplies needed for district offices can be bought more cheaply in the House Stationery Store and mailed to the district in orange bags.
- Use the message box program on your PC, cutting down on the need for message pads.
- Consider using Mapscos and Criss-Cross directories for several years instead of buying new ones every year. The Washington office can use the older editions.
- Curtail the number of flags distributed to constituents without reimbursement.

TRAVEL

- Consider longer and less frequent Member trips to the district.
- If the primary purpose of a trip to the district relates to campaign functions, campaign funds should be used. Check with the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct if any uncertainty exists.
- Schedule flights in advance to get low-priced fares. Utilize frequent-flyer coupons.
- Consult the Federal Travel Directory for available government discount rates which can be obtained through Official Travel Authorization or the Diner's Club Charge Card Program.
- The Member can utilize the statutory mileage entitlement for two one-way trips each year.
- When traveling through the district, the Member could stay in the home of constituents or friends. It's good politics and saves money.
- Washington staff should consider staying with friends, relatives or district staff while in the district on official business. Eliminate or limit reimbursement for this.
- District staff traveling to Washington could stay with Washington staff members or in hotels near staffers' homes — riding to and from the office with them. (Hotels in suburbs are usually cheaper.)
- Minimize the use of rental cars — staff can transport the Member. If you do rent a car, insure it through the Member's personal coverage.
- Lease a car in the district instead of always renting one. Send out form letters to obtain the lowest rate for leased car insurance, or add it to the Member's personal car coverage. Use the car for staff travel when the Member is not in the district, making personal vehicle mileage reimbursement unnecessary.
- Rent or lease older vehicles at reduced rates.
- Provide a lower than average mileage reimbursement rate. Restrict reimbursements for parking and taxis.
- If the Member is returning to the district primarily to participate in a function sponsored by a private organization, it may be appropriate for the private sponsor to pay for the Member's travel expenses. The Committee on Standards of Official Conduct should be consulted.
- When several staff members in the district receive mileage reimbursement, careful coordination of trips and errands should occur in order to effect the lowest reimbursable mileage.

PUBLICATIONS/SUBSCRIPTIONS

- Evaluate whether you really need all of the publications you are currently receiving. Eliminate duplication.
- Eliminate subscriptions for publications that are available in the CRS reading room.
- Receive subscriptions for district papers in only one office. Have an intern clip and send or telecopy important articles to other offices.
- Share CQ and National Journal with the office across the hall.
- Some offices receive both the daily and weekly Congressional Quarterly. The more comprehensive service could be better for generalist offices, while the daily, in-depth service could be more appropriate for offices with a heavier emphasis on legislation.
- Members can bring personal subscriptions to the office rather than using Official Expense funds for additional copies for the office.
- Schedule subscriptions to expire at the end of the fiscal year to permit the flexibility of renewing them with unexpended year-end funds.
- Be certain you are receiving all subscriptions regularly provided on a complimentary basis to congressional offices and that you are not paying for additional subscriptions to these.
- Evaluate the relative costs of receiving extensive subscriptions vs. utilizing a clipping service.

PERSONNEL

- Use unpaid interns as much as possible. Some students can get college credit for congressional internships. Numerous organizations sponsor "fellows" to work in positions on Capitol Hill.
- Eliminate one of two receptionist positions. Replace with interns or with staffers rotating in for a few hours each week.
- Give lower starting salaries rather than cutting existing staff salaries.
- Lengthen the time between salary reviews.
- Replace departing full-time employees with part-time people. This is most feasible for office managers and computer operators. An office manager for two offices would lower the cost to each office.
- Instead of giving permanent salary increases, consider giving more one-time merit rewards or allowing extra leave, especially around holidays and recesses.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Restrict attendance at conferences requiring fees.
- Utilize your GSA liaison as much as possible to determine other ways of effectively using your GSA account.
- Instead of buying new furniture for new offices, have GSA refurbish the furniture used by the former Member. GSA will refurbish it for free, and sell it to you at the original acquisition cost — which can be quite a bargain depending on how long ago it was purchased.



SECTION III

PLANNING AND BUDGETING PROCESSES

CHAPTER 1

A WAY OUT — LONG RANGE PLANNING

"Courageous Management Makes Good Politics"

H. Jerome Mirone
Cutback Management Specialist

THE VALUE OF PLANNING

Members of Congress and their key political aides generally have a finely tuned sense of what planning consists of and why it is necessary, which they have developed or honed in past successful campaigns for office. In most campaigns, limited resources include the candidate's time, the paid and volunteer staff's time and campaign funds. Those concerned fully understand that they must make a series of hard choices between competing opportunities, to effectively utilize these resources. They make decisions like what three or four themes they want to be identified with and which swing voter blocks they will spend the most time and money on winning over. Their mission is clear, their goals are articulated and the use of their time and money is carefully prioritized. Why, then, do many congressional offices have difficulty applying these principles and practices to the incumbent operation?

A campaign is a relatively simple operation. The mission is always clear—usually a minimum of 50.1% of the vote; the task is straightforward — to defeat an opponent; the situation analysis is usually thorough—relatively reliable data is usually developed on fundraising, targeting issues, etc.; and the imminence of election day forces the campaign to focus. Goal setting and prioritizing become second nature.

An incumbency is a very different affair. It lasts a minimum of two years, not just a few months, and does not inherently have a clear goal and time limit for achieving success, as an election campaign does. Instead of responding solely to the needs and input of potential voters, the incumbent must also respond to pushes and pulls from the administration, the leadership, committee chairmen, caucus colleagues, national lobbyists, and many others. The external pressures to focus on a wide range of issues and demands are constant and considerable. In addition, the cross-fertilization of ideas between Members who rub shoulders daily is intense, resulting in a strong internal impulse to generate new projects and directions. In sum, the natural instinct for planning and prioritizing found in the campaign is often overwhelmed by the complexity of incumbency. Yet, precisely because of this complexity, strategic planning is, if anything, more necessary.

Politically, the advantages of strategic planning are self-evident. Defining where you want to go and generally how you expect to get there is usually necessary for success. Of course, you must remain flexible and be able to seize unanticipated opportunities, but there is a world of difference between this and directionless meandering.

Organizationally, the advantages seem less evident, judging by the number of offices which report the need for clearer statement of goals and priorities from the Member. (In fact, the Congressional Management Foundation has probably never conducted a consultation for a House or Senate office in which a significant number of staff didn't report the need for a clearer statement of the office's mission and goals.) The organizational imperative for strategic planning lies in the concept of synergism, in which the simultaneous action of separate parts of an organization together have a greater total effect than the sum of their individual effects. Frequently, even in small House offices, staffers view the same project with a different sense of its importance or priority. Other staffers work separately on the same tasks without knowing that their efforts overlap, or in ways which fail to utilize each other's resources for maximum leverage.

The net result of such uncoordinated activity is that the effective sum of the effort expended is LESS than the sum of the efforts of the individual parts. In an era of diminishing resources, offices would do well to recover as much of this "lost" effort as possible. The frequently heard motto is "work smarter not harder."

There are also important personal reasons for long range planning — both for the Member and the staff. The personal strain on a Member can be intense — the long hours, the frequent commuting to the district, the queues of constituents and lobbyists demanding interviews or requesting appearances, the need to be informed on a wide range of complex, changing issues. Strategic planning can provide a clearer, more reliable set of guidelines about which opportunities or demands you can afford to pass up or say "no" to — and sometimes you'll find these are opportunities you would never have dreamed of declining earlier. Even more basically, a clarified sense of mission can revitalize an incumbent who may have become weary of the endless rounds of budget battles, press events and fundraisers which have almost become ends in themselves.

For staff, knowing what is of foremost importance to the Member in the long run (not just what is TODAY'S hot priority) enables real prioritization to occur and reduces stress and burnout.

Finally, the relationship between long-range planning and effective budgeting is almost absolute. In the absence of meaningful planning, budgeting becomes a technical exercise for preserving the status quo instead of a tool for forwarding the Member's vision. If you are convinced that you should give more attention to planning, the following pages will give you some suggested approaches you may want to incorporate into your existing procedures. They include techniques specifically designed for the needs of "cutback management." However, before we examine what these techniques consist of, it is important to briefly discuss how you will use them. There are pitfalls, especially in times of financial austerity, to which you need to be sensitive.

IMPLEMENTING A PLANNING PROCESS

THE MEMBER

If you are a staffer, you may be nodding in agreement with everything that has been said, while simultaneously shaking your head saying, "but I'll never get the Member to do this."

Of course, you are right to be concerned about the need for the Member's involvement. For long-range planning and budgeting to be really effective, it is critical to have the Member's genuine involvement — a merely cosmetic commitment will prevent successful planning. If your Member is not very inclined to this sort of thing, or is really uncomfortable with this sort of focusing, your effectiveness will be severely limited. What can you do about this? Here are a few suggestions:

- Clearly relate the process to campaign strategizing. Members understand this. Sell it for its political benefits, rather than its management benefits.
- Consult another trusted advisor the Member respects. If two or three of you are strongly endorsing the idea of long-range planning, your Member is more apt to give it a chance.
- Use the data on the fiscal-crisis syndrome to impress upon the Member the need for more formal planning processes, despite the fact that he or she has gotten along just fine without them in a previous era.
- Call in a consultant — an outside facilitator will often be regarded as an "expert," and will be able to take a firmer, more effective stand with a client than the staff can.
- Acknowledge the fact that the Member may not want to be fully open about his or her plans. He or she may be planning to run for another office, or a leadership position or a committee chair and it may be premature to announce this beyond a circle of trusted advisors. Frankly, this will cause some lack of synergism in the office but political realities may dictate silence. In any case, it usually still makes sense to clarify that part of the game plan which is not confidential, or a set of goals which may even represent a contingency plan.

A great deal depends on the nature of the relationship between the Member and the AA, and the degree of involvement the Member has with the internal affairs of the office. In some offices, the Member may need to be only minimally involved in the planning process for it to work; in others it will require the Member's full commitment. Generally speaking, the greater the involvement of the Member, the more meaning the process will have. The wise Member can benefit enormously from a staff which is in harmony with his or her goals. Articulating a plan is well worth an investment of the Member's time, precisely because his or her time is such a precious commodity. Good planning will help you make better decisions about how to allocate this valuable time in the future.

THE STAFF

It is as important to involve the staff as it is to involve the Member in a planning process during a period of budgetary cutbacks.

The problem is this: most human beings are somewhat apprehensive about change. They become comfortable working in certain ways whether or not these are the most effective ways of doing things. Most will listen with some interest if you tell them you're going to introduce something which may make their jobs a little easier or more rewarding. But if the activity implies the possibility

of a major restructuring of the organization, or of what it does and how it does it, many staff will experience some anxiety and resistance to the idea. Change is an unknown quantity, and they are not easily convinced that it can actually occur — or that if it does occur, it will be beneficial to them and the organization.

The degree to which staff resist change is partially a function of the history of change in the office. If very little has changed in ten or twenty years, it will be difficult to get staff comfortable with the idea of changing things now. On the other hand, if the office has experienced too much change (a spate of recent dismissals and resignations, for example) they too, may be leery of it.

Most people readily accept change if they perceive that they have something to gain from it. In a period of financial austerity and budgetary cutbacks, managers generally lack tangible rewards to offer as change-incentives. The intangible, psychological reward of regarding staff as professionals who should be consulted about envisioned changes assumes a greater importance.

Clearly, managers must be equally concerned with the PROCESS of planning for retrenchment as they are with the outcomes. You want your staff behind the plan when you're ready to implement it. How each office achieves this will depend on the Member's style, the AA's style, the maturity or "newness" of the staff, the office's history of dealing with change, the severity of the budget crunch and other factors. However, it may help you to bear in mind a few guidelines:

- Staff are more likely to "buy into" a plan which they have participated in helping to create. You may need to "loosen" your formal organizational structure to facilitate staff participation.
- Being forthright with staff usually earns respect and reduces anxiety, e.g. "We are going to review our office operations from top to bottom so we can be more effective despite our reduced budget. We will be working to better define our priorities and to identify better methods of accomplishing these. Though there are no plans for eliminating any positions as a result of this it's only honest to say that this could be an outcome of such a process. We hope that thoughtful long-range planning done now will help us to avoid this."
- Staff desire for security and effectiveness can be harnessed to help develop creative ideas for reducing costs and identifying more productive work procedures. In fact, they may see this as their chance to get you to listen to "what they've been saying all along about . . ."
- Special efforts should be taken to keep communication channels open. As discussed above, fiscal crisis tends to spawn a more centralized management mode which can breed distrust. Making special efforts to keep staff informed and to solicit their input will counteract this. If restrictive memos must be issued (no business cards for staff, no mileage fee reimbursement for driving Member around district, etc.) make the tone in which they're written as collegial as possible, diminishing the inherent authoritarianism in such a message.
- If you do need to dismiss a productive staff member to balance the budget, it is critical that this be done in as supportive a manner as possible. This will be covered in greater detail later in this manual.
- Remember to apply all of these points equally to home district staff. They are often forgotten about, though their lives are affected by decisions made — and their support is needed too. Communication between Washington and district offices is essential in periods of cutback to minimize rumours the informal grapevine will spread.

In short, it's no good having a sophisticated plan if your staff aren't fully aboard, or worse, if the planning process has alienated them. Whatever your management style, be sensitive to this fact and make efforts to maximize support for the plan and the planning process among your staff.

THE OUTSIDE WORLD

A final caveat before we examine specific planning tools: you need to consider the effect your plan will have on those outside the office — constituents, the press, caucuses you belong to, your committee staff, your erstwhile political opponents and your colleagues.

You may decide to cut (or even just consider cutting) something from your budget which affects a specific constituency. For example, you may consider closing a district office in a small farming community or not renewing your membership in a Legislative Service Organization to which you

currently belong. You will want to avoid leaks of information about the options you are considering, especially if these are options which you may not ultimately implement. If you do decide to implement a cutback which may generate a negative reaction, you will want to minimize the backlash. To do this you need to predict that the backlash may occur and develop a strategy to defuse it. Otherwise, the vocal opposition to the move may require you to rescind it and to cut something else which is more important to your core mission. The strategy to mollify anticipated opposition, and the selection of the right person to implement it, is of course entirely dependent on the situation. An effective campaign advisory committee, for example, can be helpful in mitigating negative effects back home. The important thing is to take into account the need for such a strategy.

If your planning process is an open one, and if you feel that any sensitive matters are under discussion, it may be necessary to remind newer staff that what is being discussed is for internal consumption only. This, of course, extends to any written memos regarding the planning.

Generally speaking, consult (or at least take into account) anyone whose interests or operations may be affected by your planning and budgeting activities. In a cutback situation, almost by definition, you can't please everyone concerned. However, you can sensitively deal with their issues and, by doing so, maximize support and minimize opposition to your plans.

PREPARING FOR PLANNING

Before you can begin long-range planning you need to spend a little time preparing for the process. Because long-range planning isn't related to day-to-day duties, it will get put off unless scheduled. Recesses usually offer the most time for thinking, meeting and planning, so we recommend firmly scheduling a planning session during a recess. **WARNING:** Effective long-range planning does require a significant time commitment.

WHO IS IN YOUR PLANNING GROUP?

The next question you must answer for yourself after "When will you plan?" is "Who will be involved in the planning process?" Just the Member and AA? The office manager? The Legislative Director? The Scheduler? The District Rep? Key advisors or campaign aides not on the office payroll? This will be a function of management style but remember, as a general rule, the more involvement the staff have in creating a plan, the more commitment they'll have to implementing it.

A subset of this question (and possibly a solution to any dilemma you feel over the proper composition of the group) is who should be involved in WHICH STAGE of planning? Perhaps only the key strategists should be involved in a review of your core mission, the entire staff might participate in translating this into functional priorities, and the AA and office manager should hammer those into a workable plan and budget. In practice, such a division won't be quite this neat. Conclusions reached at one stage may require re-examining decisions made at an earlier stage. But making some decisions as to who participates in each stage of the planning process can help to make the process more manageable.

WHERE WILL YOUR PLANNING TAKE PLACE?

Whether you conduct your planning primarily with a small core group or with all of the Washington and home district staff together, it is best to schedule a block of time away from the office. The activity is important enough to warrant this. If you're in the office, or even if you're in a committee or caucus room during a working day, key people will be pulled away to handle "emergencies." This will weaken your process and the outcome.

Ideally, you would be able to hold a planning retreat off the Hill. Budget realities and House regulations may preclude this. Do the best you can to create a distraction-free environment. Using a committee room during a recess period may serve the function. Particularly if the Member is present, it sends a clear signal that the process is being taken seriously if interruptions are met with disapproval.

WHAT TO BRING ALONG

You'll need a fair amount of information, in both raw or predigested form. Such things as new demographic profiles, polling data, mail counts, logs of Member visits to each county, past memos on office goals or political strategy, past budgets, and the like may all be useful, especially if everyone in the planning group isn't already intimately familiar with them.

If the planning group is small, you may want to solicit information and views from Washington and home district staff on what they feel the office's priorities should be. A simple format might be:

- What were the accomplishments of the office/your unit last year?
- What were the weaknesses of the office/your unit last year?
- What should be our objectives for the coming year for the office/your unit?

This is another way to demonstrate that you value staff input.

A very handy tool, almost a necessity, is a flip chart or blackboard. If there are more than two people involved you need this to brainstorm and to conceptualize the choices which must be made.

With these simple props, the information suggested, some time and a distraction-free space, you have created an environment conducive to planning.

CHAPTER 2

PLANNING PROCESSES AND WORKSHEETTS

"The process of evaluating alternatives and focusing on a strategic plan . . . will involve intuitive judgement, as well as a disciplined method of questioning and gathering information."

H. J. Potts
Strategic Planning Specialist

LONG-RANGE PLANNING

Let's start by acknowledging the obvious — there is no one right way to conduct a long-range planning process, in times of growth or cutback. Each office will have its own style and its own needs. There are, however, certain actions which need to be taken if the planning is to be effective. The planning methods offices choose will vary. Some will approach planning intuitively, others very formally. In this section we briefly discuss each stage of the planning process in terms of what you want to achieve from it. Then we will offer one or two tools you may want to use at that stage. Of course, you may already have developed your own tools with which you're more comfortable.

At any time, long-range planning attempts to answer five basic questions:

1. Where are we now?
2. Where do we WANT to go?
3. How do we get there?
4. Who is responsible?
5. What is the cost?

In times of cutback this is slightly modified to:

1. Where are we now?
2. Where do we NEED to go?
3. How do we get there?
4. Who is responsible?
5. How do we afford it?

The broad steps for transforming these questions into action are:

1. Understanding the Member's basic or core mission;
2. Analyzing the office's current situation, in terms of both its internal operations and external environmental factors (in times of fiscal stress the internal analysis assumes added importance);
3. Setting goals and clarifying priorities;
4. Expressing these in an action plan which assigns responsibilities and time frames;
5. Assigning budget figures to those activities requiring financial commitment and adjusting activities to fit within the budget allocation;
6. Establishing mechanisms for monitoring progress and expenditures;

THE CORE MISSION

In many ways, defining the CORE MISSION is the most difficult part of planning. It is so fundamental that many Members seem to have difficulty articulating it, though they may intuitively operate from it. The problem with this is that unless the Member communicates his or her concept of the mission to the staff, they can't fully share it and provide optimum support for it.

When initially asked about their core mission most Members will respond, "To give the people in my district the best representation possible." Of course they are right that this is the generic mission of a Representative, but just as each Member is highly individualistic, so too is the specific sense of mission from which he or she operates. Unless this is identified and articulated, it remains obscure to the staff.

"To get the Member re-elected" is also an incomplete mission statement. Of course this is a generic mission, but standing alone it fails to give adequate direction.

Some people will argue that mission statements are functions of the political situation and should be discussed after the analysis of the external environment has been done. To some degree they are correct. The initial mission statements may need reviewing once a full situation analysis has been done. But we have found that it is extremely helpful to the rest of the planning process if the Member's personal sense of mission and the mission for his or her personal office is clarified at the beginning of the process. It provides a fundamental measure by which other factors in the planning

process can be assigned value. Oddly enough, if you simply can't narrow down the mission statements beyond the generic, you can still successfully conduct a long-range planning process. But if you are able to more specifically frame the mission statements, it will add clarity and even a sense of excitement to the process.

DEFINING THE CORE MISSION

Generic mission statements for a Member of Congress include:

- To represent my district's interests
- To be an effective legislator;
- To provide efficient constituent service;
- To get re-elected.

But these may translate into specific mission statements for different Members. For example:

Profile: An Hispanic Member of Congress, representing an economically depressed Texas district. Trained as an educator, started in politics on the school board and built impressive credentials as an education reformer. Freshman who must solidify base by winning more support in non-Hispanic community.

Possible Mission Statements:

- To work to rebuild the Texas economy;
- To improve education, especially for minorities;
- To ensure a FAIR immigration policy.
- To identify and address non-Hispanic community problems.

In other words, these are the fundamental priorities for this Member, stemming from personal conviction and/or political realities. These are the primary goals he wants his staff working towards which underlie many of the smaller projects they undertake and actions they perform. This is what defines his sense of mission in Congress and gives him and his incumbency its unique character.

Profile: Senior Member from the Northeast. Steel plant closings have caused widespread unemployment. Redistricting added a farm community to his district in which his support is soft. Prominent lawmaker whose national legislative agenda is achieved primarily through the subcommittee he chairs. Is personally an ardent conservationist.

Possible Mission Statements for Member's personal office:

- To maintain support in Member's traditional political base so Member can focus on his national agenda;
- To understand and represent the district's farm interests;
- To support job-retraining and investment programs;
- To champion conservation causes.

Profile: Member represents an economically sound sunbelt district. She holds a Masters degree from Georgetown in International Relations and has made herself a credible expert on arms control. She has aspirations to run for the Senate in four years when she expects the current senior Senator to retire.

Possible Mission Statements:

- To be heavily visible in the district, listening to people's views;
- To be concerned with the welfare of the entire state, and perceived as a champion of statewide interests.
- To pursue Arms Control linked to National Security as the first international priority.

CORE MISSION EXERCISE 1

The preceding examples give some idea of what an office's mission statements might look like. How do you clarify the core mission for your office? It can be as simple as the Member answering a few questions like the following:

What Do I Want to Achieve in Congress?

What Does My District Need Most?

What Do I Want to be Known For?

A Member may want to give some thought to this prior to a planning session or retreat. If you care to try a more sophisticated approach, a Member can go through the following exercise to help clarify the core mission statements.

CORE MISSION EXERCISE 2

1) Fill in the two or three most important answers in each category:

MEMBER'S VALUES

MEMBER'S INTERESTS

DISTRICT'S NEEDS/INTERESTS

CAMPAIGN THEMES/PROMISES

KEY POLLING DATA/
POLITICAL IMPERATIVES

PARTY'S NEEDS/INTERESTS

INSTITUTIONAL NEEDS
(HOUSE/SENATE)

NATIONAL INTERESTS

GLOBAL INTERESTS

2) Choose those answers or combination of answers which are most important to you from Column 1 and phrase them as mission statements:

A)

B)

C)

D)

CORE MISSION EVALUATION

If you want to evaluate competing mission statements to select the three or four which are most important, you can use this grid to do so. Write in each proposed statement and check off each criteria it fulfills. Those which are compatible with all or most of the criteria are the most likely to serve as good guiding lights.

Criteria	Proposed Mission Statement (A)	Proposed Mission Statement (B)	Proposed Mission Statement (C)	Proposed Mission Statement (D)
Member's Values				
Member's Interests				
District's Interests				
Campaign Themes/ Promises				
Political Goals				
Party's Interests				
Interests of Congress				
National Interest				
Global Interests				

ANALYZING THE EXISTING SITUATION

The previous exercises were designed to give those involved in the planning process a clearer perception of the Member's mission for the office. If the exercises were done before the planning meeting, it is vital that the outcomes be communicated to the planning group and, if this doesn't include all the staff, to the remaining staff as well. Feedback and requests for further clarification should be encouraged to help the entire team grasp the mission and buy into it.

You are now ready to examine the existing situation, the "Where are we now?" question, and to relate your current status to the newly articulated office mission.

EXTERNAL ANALYSIS

We're going to spend very little time here on analysis of the external environment. You and your planning group are intimately familiar with your district and its politics, and with the status of your major legislative initiatives. You know your weak spots and your strengths. Undoubtedly, someone has recently written a campaign plan which analyzed the district and your support. The Legislative Director has been regularly briefing the Member on the movement of bills which are important to your office.

It is unlikely that a formal process is necessary to review your political and legislative status. An informal discussion may be useful and important to shake out any significant differences in perspective. It will probably be useful to note the most salient points on your flip-chart to help focus everyone. These are not things "we're doing" but things that are happening "out there" that could affect us.

EXTERNAL SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

STRONG POINTS/
POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

WEAK POINTS/
NEGATIVE DEVELOPMENTS

POLITICAL

POLITICAL

LEGISLATIVE

LEGISLATIVE

CONSTITUENT RELATIONS

CONSTITUENT RELATIONS

PRESS

PRESS

GENERAL TRENDS IN THE
ENVIRONMENT THAT COULD
AFFECT US POSITIVELY

GENERAL TRENDS IN THE
ENVIRONMENT THAT COULD
AFFECT US NEGATIVELY

When you've completed listing views on external weaknesses and strengths and reach a consensus on any conflicting views, it may be useful for you to rank the three or five most important situations to address in your planning, either as opportunities or potential dangers. If any major revelations occurred during your external analysis, you may, at this stage, need to amend or add to your core mission statement.

INTERNAL ANALYSIS

By internal analysis we mean an analysis of the utilization of your office's resources — staff, space, equipment and official funds. We'll spend a little more time on how you might conduct an internal analysis. In cutback management, this internal review assumes far more importance than it would under other circumstances. In this stage, you are reviewing the activities your office is engaged in and questioning the assumptions which underlay the activities. You are essentially asking, "Do we really need to be doing this?" and, if so, "Can we do it more efficiently?" You are doing this in relation to the outward-facing activities you do (press conferences, town meetings, Christmas card mailings, blood-donation drives, etc.) and to the inward facing activities (filing, proofreading procedures, scheduling mechanisms, etc.) You would probably benefit by doing this at an office-wide level and at an individual staff level. You are looking for ways to save two things:

- 1) Official expense funds
- 2) Staff time

Obviously, you are interested in any direct savings of official expenses you can effect. Almost as obvious is the need to conserve staff time — it is almost certain that you will not be able to hire additional staff. You may have to leave recent vacancies unfilled and other staff may have to be let go if the budget cutbacks deepen.

There is real potential for savings in this stage if you can overcome one huge hurdle: the tendency to feel that you should continue doing something simply because you have done it for a very long time. Intellectually we realize precedent alone is insufficient reason to keep doing something — the action must continue to serve a valid purpose and one more valid than other things you could be doing with your office's time and money. But emotionally we can find ourselves reluctant and distrustful about discontinuing an activity that appeared to serve us well in past years. And, indeed, we **SHOULD** be cautious about jettisoning old, proven programs. But we should not be so cautious as to continue tying up staff time and money if:

- The problem the activity was designed to handle no longer exists;
- The activity isn't very productive;
- There are now better ways to achieve the same result;
- We could be doing something more relevant to our current mission if we freed up those staff and budgetary resources.

Frankly, reluctance to change an old work pattern, or an annual office activity, will often be found at Member level. It's almost a political instinct not to change something that is part of the overall package which keeps the Member coming back every election. But times change and the question must be answered, "How much is this specific action really contributing to the overall success?" In campaigns you don't spend as much time as you did in the church parking lot anymore, and you use that time instead in the TV studio. Well, there may be analogous situations in your incumbent operation. In times of cutback, you've got to be willing to re-examine everything. And the same holds true for the staffer who has been with the Member since the first election — he or she, too, must be willing to review, and to change or drop long-standing activities if they are no longer fully justifiable in terms of the office's mission, its diminished resources and the trade-offs they represent.

The following exercise is worthwhile for the staff to do individually, or as a group exercise. Remind the staff that this is an opportunity to make their workload more manageable, their hard efforts more productive, and to find cost-saving strategies which may translate into available clerk-hire allowance. It deserves their best thought. If the exercise is done individually, the AA should collect and synthesize the responses. The end-product of this exercise is a distilled list of activities to reinforce, eliminate, or perform more efficiently.

CRITICAL CUTBACK QUESTIONS

	Constituent Communication	Community Outreach/ Special Projects	Legislative Activity
What must we continue to do? Why?			
What can we stop doing? Why?			
What can we do more efficiently saving time and/or money? How?			
What are the time-honored activities that haven't undergone close scrutiny in years? Can we stop doing these/do them more efficiently?			
What activities are relatively high cost or time consuming? Can we stop doing these/ do them more efficiently?			
Where can we use low-cost or volunteer help? How can we get this?			
How can we make better use of technology to save time/money?			

Press Activity	Office Administration	Interoffice Communication	Constituent Service	Scheduling

CRITICAL CUTBACK QUESTIONS SUMMARY

Summarize the previous exercise by listing the office's tentative conclusions in the following categories:

Actions we MUST continue to do —

Actions we can stop doing —

Actions we can do more efficiently —

Actions we can get low cost or volunteer help to perform —

Ways in which we can make better use of technology —

ESTABLISHING GOALS AND FUNCTIONAL PRIORITIES

You now have a clear sense of the overall mission for the office, an estimation of external factors and developments which should be addressed by the planning process, and extensive staff input on which office activities must be reinforced or done more efficiently and which should be seriously considered for elimination or de-emphasis.

The next step is to translate these into operational goals and functional priorities.

BRAINSTORMING

A helpful mechanism at this stage is brainstorming. Taking one functional area at a time, have planning group members propose which goals and activities the office should focus on. At this stage, the group isn't critically evaluating the suggestions, but is simply exercising some free-wheeling creativity and listing activities for consideration. In established offices, these will include many activities already underway which have stood the test of the previous exercise.

But this is also a time to examine new possibilities, especially those that might support the Member's newly articulated mission statements, or address situations discovered in the external and internal analyses. One of the functions of a concentrated planning process is to help the Member identify new areas of opportunities, areas where he or she may want to assume a high-profile leadership role. At this stage ideas in this vein should be **UNCRITICALLY ENCOURAGED** — they'll be subjected to careful evaluation in the next stage. Record each idea on a flip-chart or blackboard as it is presented.

Before moving on to the worksheets, please note one thing about constituent service goals. Some offices have difficulty with this. Constituent service almost by definition is a responsive activity: constituents have problems — you help them with their problems. Goal setting and setting priorities don't seem applicable. We suggest that they are. In addition to being responsive or reactive you can also be proactive. For example, a Member from a Florida district can send out newsletters to senior citizens which remind them that they can contact the Member if they have any problems related to their Social Security payments or Medicare. This office is actively soliciting a **TYPE** of casework. Another office uses a mobile van or rents a room twice a month in a remote part of the district to take in casework. This office is finding new **CHANNELS** to solicit casework and connect the Member to his or her constituents. Another office may go beyond writing letters or phoning agencies and may drive the indigent constituent to the welfare center to sign up for a workfare program. This office is offering enhanced **LEVELS** of service.

Unfortunately, in a cutback management situation, instead of finding new creative ways to offer and provide service, you will probably have to determine how you will cut back to core services — foregoing or curtailing the use of the mobile van, reducing newsletters and reviewing the highly individualistic community service programs which have become office traditions. However, it is still valuable to go through a brainstorming process. You may develop a few ideas which will magnificently support the office's newly articulated mission and find that you can implement them in place of some other activity without consuming additional resources. Or, using ideas generated in your internal situation analysis, you may be able to use new volunteer resources to support additional constituent service activity.

BRAINSTORMING *LEGISLATIVE* GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

Include all current activities which should be continued and new ones which should be considered for adoption (leave "PRIORITY" column empty during brainstorming exercise).

ACTIVITY	PRIORITY
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	
12.	
13.	
14.	
15.	
16.	
17.	
18.	
19.	
20.	

BRAINSTORMING *COMMUNICATION* GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

Include all current activities which should be continued and new ones which should be considered for adoption (leave "PRIORITY" column empty during brainstorming exercise).

ACTIVITY

PRIORITY

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.
- 17.
- 18.
- 19.
- 20.

BRAINSTORMING CONSTITUENT SERVICE GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

Include all current activities which should be continued and new ones which should be considered for adoption (leave "PRIORITY" column empty during brainstorming exercise).

ACTIVITY	PRIORITY
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	
12.	
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16.	
17.	
18.	
19.	
20.	

BRAINSTORMING ADMINISTRATIVE GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

Include all current activities which should be continued and new ones which should be considered for adoption (leave "PRIORITY" column empty during brainstorming exercise).

ACTIVITY	PRIORITY
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	
12.	
13.	
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19.	
20.	

The obvious next step after brainstorming is to evaluate, accept, discard and prioritize ideas. You can brainstorm one function, such as legislative goals, and then begin evaluating the suggested activities, or you can brainstorm for each functional area before you begin an evaluation process.

The simplest method of evaluating and prioritizing is to set up four value levels and assign one of these to each idea. The four levels are:

- 1) First priority — This activity is essential to the accomplishment of our mission.
- 2) Second priority — This activity is important and should be done as soon as we have made sure that first priority activities are under control.
- 3) Third priority — This would be good to do if we have or can find the resources. It would help us, but we shouldn't do it if it distracts from 1st and 2nd priority actions.
- 4) Discard — This activity is counterproductive to our current mission. It is not or is no longer a needed activity and would consume our limited resources without really contributing to our mission.

A good way to begin the evaluation process is to ask which items should be classified as first-priority. Someone will volunteer an item and there will either be consensus or a discussion will ensue. Obviously, discussion is fully encouraged but it should probably be limited to five minutes per item so the process doesn't bog down. Points of contention can be reconsidered in greater depth at a later time. Depending on the interpersonal dynamics between the Member and staff, the Member may want to hold his or her views in reserve until hearing the staff's views. In some cases, if the Member volunteers his or her views first, individual staff may be hesitant about offering diverging views which could deny the Member useful input. Ultimately, of course, the Member's views regarding what he or she considers first priority MUST be known and must be deferred to.

Try to limit your office to five or six "first priority" items. Otherwise the designation becomes relatively meaningless. Everything CAN'T be first priority. Staff must be left with a clear sense of where they should devote their energies and resources if confronted with multiple competing demands. A meaningful prioritization will help guide their decisions and actions toward a synergistic result.

After selecting five or six first priority items, repeat the exercise for 2nd and then 3rd priorities. You don't necessarily need to limit the number of third priorities; it is understood that these will only be pursued if resources permit. Assigning third priority status is a way of acknowledging that we'd love to do this but we probably can't right now; we'll keep it listed though (just in case) and by our next planning session factors may have changed so we can raise its priority. You may or may not have any items to put in the "discard" category, but don't hesitate to put something there if that's where it clearly belongs; doing so will have the effect of publicly burying it so it doesn't rise at some later point to consume your staff and budgetary resources.

As a priority is assigned to each item, note it beside the goal or activity in the right hand column. After the planning session, a designated staffer can group all of the first, second and third priorities together under each function. These should then be recorded in a memo for all staff and included in the office orientation manual for new staff.

The above procedure will suffice for most offices trying to prioritize their activities. However, there are a couple of other tools you may want to use.

The first of these is a simple device which can help you to decide between assigning an activity a first or second priority status, or a second or third priority status. It is essentially a tool for correlating the priority of a goal with your ability to actually achieve it. For example, you may consider a unilateral nuclear test-ban bill top priority for the nation, but realistically assess your chances of achieving it as nil. Therefore, you will probably decide it should not be given first priority status in the office. Conversely, you may consider a bill to cease production of the MX missile of moderate priority for the nation, but assess that there is a high probability this could be achieved if you played a leadership role. You may thus decide to give this first priority status in your office.

The following is a simple grid to help you measure how these two factors of "priority" and "ability to achieve" relate. Simply locate the proposed goal or activity in the quadrant which most aptly characterizes it. We have marked each quadrant with a priority designation, to serve as a guideline. You are still free, of course, to upgrade or downgrade the priority, but you probably shouldn't do so by more than one step either way. Use this grid when you are having difficulty achieving a consensus on prioritizing a goal or activity.

PRIORITY/ACHIEVABILITY GRID

P R I O R I T Y	HIGH	High Priority; Low Ability to Affect or Achieve [2nd Priority]	High Priority; High Ability to Affect or Achieve [1st Priority]
	LOW	Low Priority; Low Ability to Affect or Achieve [Discard]	Low Priority; High Ability to Affect or Achieve [3rd Priority]
		ABILITY TO ACHIEVE	
		LOW	HIGH

Some of you may want a more precise tool for determining high or low priorities, something more than a subjective feeling about the goal or activity. These offices can use the next tool to help objectively rank priorities for competing legislative, communications or constituent service goals. It simply gives you a way of measuring competing goals against a set of criteria, similar to the tool provided for evaluating competing mission statements in Chapter Two of this section.

Of course, you have to decide if the criteria are correct for your office. We have suggested generic criteria. You may want to cross off some and add others. Or, you may decide that a particular criterion is so important to your office that you give it double or triple weight, or insist that any goal stand up to that criterion if it is to be given a first-priority ranking, regardless of how well it holds up against other criteria. This is an instrument which you can tailor to your needs.

Assign one point for each criterion satisfied by the proposed goal, or more if you are giving it added weight. Compare the total score with the amount the other goals scored and assign first priority status to the top five or six scoring goals. If political instinct or some other factor overrides the original ranking, adjust the priority accordingly.

**SAMPLE CRITERIA FOR PRIORITIZING
LEGISLATIVE, COMMUNICATIONS OR
CONSTITUENT SERVICE GOALS**

	Goal	Goal	Goal	Goal
Compatible with Mission Statement				
Compatible with Member's credentials				
Takes advantage of committee slots and caucus positions				
Consistent with constituent needs				
Consistent with campaign promises				
Opportunity for leadership role				
Press potential				
Consistent with political goals				
Consistent with polling data				
Consistent with desired image				
"Fits" with Member's personal style				
No excessive drain on Member's time				
No excessive drain on staff time				
No excessive drain on budgetary resources				
Has support of key advisors				
Is a proven program				
Right timing?				
No excessive downside risks				
Consistent with other programs				
Within the capability of existing staff and equipment				
Utilizes staff strengths				
Other _____				
Other _____				
Total Score:	_____	_____	_____	_____
Priority Ranking:	_____	_____	_____	_____
Revised ranking if political instinct or some other factor overrides the original ranking:	_____	_____	_____	_____

Goal		Goal		Goal		Goal		Goal		Goal
-------------	--	-------------	--	-------------	--	-------------	--	-------------	--	-------------

Administrative Goals

Administrative goals should also be evaluated and assigned priorities, but they should be measured by a very different set of criteria. Offices are always seeking to upgrade their internal systems — both human and automated — and must work out the sequence and priority of internal improvements. The range of administrative goals can embrace revamping the mail system, revising the budgeting system, improving scheduling coordination, creating an office policy manual, instituting performance review sessions, installing new equipment, changing the filing system, moving the office, or many of the efficiency-improving ideas contributed during the internal analysis steps.

The following are some of the criteria you might use to evaluate your proposed administrative goals or activities, with ample weight given to the imperatives of cutback management. Of course, you can amend these criteria to suit your own office or to improve the usefulness of this chart as a tool.

Once again, the purpose of this exercise is to clarify which goals should receive the largest or most immediate commitment of Member, staff and budgetary resources.

**SAMPLE CRITERIA FOR PRIORITIZING
ADMINISTRATIVE GOALS**

PROPOSED GOALS

	Goal	Goal	Goal	Goal
Will conserve Member's time				
Will keep Member better informed				
Will save staff time				
Will improve staff coordination				
Will improve quality of work output				
Will reduce direct expenditures				
Will reduce long-term expenditures				
Will improve office's institutional memory				
Will better utilize existing office resources				
Will better utilize free resources available to office				
Will improve constituent satisfaction				
Will improve quality of work life				
Will improve monitoring and control of office operations				
Will not disrupt successful work patterns				
Other				
Other				

Total Score: _____

Priority Ranking: _____

Revised ranking, if there are other factors: _____

ACTION PLANNING

If you have gotten this far during a recess or weekend planning retreat you have done very well. You can probably take a break and spend the hour or two of remaining daylight to enjoy each other's company. Social interaction such as dinner or a visit to the House floor is important for team bonding. But don't neglect to quickly follow this up by expressing the agreed upon priorities in an action plan and then developing a budget which confirms the feasibility of the plan and supports it. If you can do this at the retreat, better yet.

Once a consensus has been reached on the relative priority of different activities, action planning is pretty easy and straightforward. At this stage you are assigning responsibilities and time frames. This is obviously important if all these good ideas are actually going to get done. But it is also important as a way of checking on how realistic your planning is.

Long-range planning in the private sector usually means 3-5 year planning. Undoubtedly the Member's plans for this time frame have been discussed at least among the core group, possibly when clarifying the Member's mission, or informally at other times. And in terms of relating planning to the time-frame in which federal deficit reduction is likely to continue to affect office budgets, you **SHOULD** be considering the next 4 or 5 years. But since congressional office budgeting is done on a yearly basis (and you effectively go out of business every two years), this long-range view must translate into what you want to accomplish in the next year and how you are going to do it. So your planning must focus heavily on this time span, though longer range goals will shape current planning. When you formulate your priorities into an action plan for next year, and assign responsibilities and time frames, you will get a better sense if your plan is "do-able" the way it is structured. It will give you the opportunity to check whether you are counting on just one or two staff to supervise or implement too many projects, or whether you are crowding too many activities into too condensed a time period. This is the point at which to adjust these factors.

It will also be useful for you to differentiate between those activities which really demand a time-line and those which do not. If you ask the Legislative Director to create a time-line for her first and second priority goals she is likely to ignore this as it may not make a lot of sense to her. She can simply draft a list of goals, designating which LA is responsible for each one. She might, however, want to schedule certain hearings or conferences on a time-line, and this would be useful both for planning and budgeting.

Parts of the administrative plan and the constituent service plan are best expressed in memo form, such as decisions to reduce the number of paper copies filed or to modify casework intake forms. Other parts are best shown on a time-line, such as installation of the new computer system, opening a part-time satellite office, conducting performance appraisals, holding the academy nominations outreach campaign or scheduling the mobile van's appearances across the district.

Your communications outreach plan, however, has to be fully expressed on a time-line. It simply demands this type of visual mapping to guard against unrealistic scheduling and to permit effective tracking and implementation. Additionally, virtually everything in this plan requires budgetary commitment and it can be **VERY** useful to lay out these expenditures on a monthly basis. Doing so facilitates comparing projected expenditures with actual expenditures at any point during the course of the year.

The following is a sample of a planning time-line which displays the activity, the accountable staffer and the projected budgetary commitment. If you draw one for the entire year for each function you'll find them to be very useful guidelines. If you insist they contain, at a minimum, any action which will require a budgetary outlay, you will find them extremely helpful when constructing your budget.

In most offices these will best be drawn by the appropriate staffer and the AA, with the office manager helping to fill in costs. The Member, of course, needs to sign off on these if they are to be meaningful.

SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN — 1987

EXTEND THROUGH DECEMBER
FEB

ACTIVITY	JAN			FEB		
	Action	Staffer	Cost	Action	Staffer	Cost
LIST ACQUISITION	Teachers List			Veterans List		
	Small Business List					
NEWSLETTERS						
District-wide, Postal Patron	New Year Questionnaire					
Targeted Newsletters				Small Business Report		
TOWN HALL MEETING NOTICES	Wayne County			Green County		
	Sussex County			Gotham Northside		
SPECIAL MAILINGS						
VIP Newsletter	1st and 15th			1st and 15th		
Academy Posters				Print & Mail		
MEDIA						
Radio Show	WINS weekly			WINS weekly		
Column	Gazette weekly			Gazette weekly		
TOWN MEETINGS	Wayne Co. Cocksville Smithville			Green Co. Black River Yellow Fork		
	Sussex Co. Great Bend Little Bend			Gotham Northside (cable TV coverage)		
MAJOR EVENTS	SMALL BUSINESS CONFERENCE			Gotham President's Day Speech		

THE BUDGET

You're now ready to craft a full budget which is based on thorough planning. Most offices already have their own format for doing this. As of this writing, the majority use manual systems, though some are automated. Most offices report that their budgeting and accounting systems served them reasonably well, so we will just briefly speak to these subjects.

In the survey we conducted, AAs who expressed high satisfaction with their planning and budgeting processes often cited good, hard budget numbers as a key for creating realistic budgets. For most expenses you'll be able to determine this by examining previous years' costs. But be very careful to allow for item-specific inflation. In other words, inflation generally may only be 3 or 4% but if your district lease is up for renewal you may have to allow for a 15% increase in rent. Or, there may be changes in telephone costs or in the way GSA leases your district office equipment.

If you don't already have a budget format, we recommend creating one which uses the same broad categories in the same order as the House Finance Office monthly summary. Though this isn't the most logical format, as like items aren't grouped together (for example, all items relating to equipment or to telephone expense), it has the great advantage of making it easier to set up a budget tracking system which parallels the accounting format of the Finance Office. This greatly simplifies life when trying to work out where you stand financially throughout the year. The categories are listed in the following order:

- Office Equipment Charge
- Equipment Purchase, Lease or Maintenance
- Habitational Expenses
- Constituent Communication
- Publications and Subscriptions
- District Office Rent (Federal)
- District Office Rent (Private)
- Official Expenses
- District Office Telephone
- Member/Office Travel
- Staff Travel
- Computer Service
- Postage
- Photographic Expenses
- Office Supplies Charge
- Food and Beverage (Non-Travel)
- Member in District Transportation Expenses
- Member in District Travel Related Expenses
- Staff in District Transportation Expenses
- Staff in District Travel Related Expenses
- Calendars
- Recording Charges
- Equipment Repairs
- Washington, D.C. Toll Calls
- Washington, D.C. Local Telephone Service
- Telegraph Expenses
- FTS
- H.I.S. Computer Reimbursements
- Official Photographic Charge
- LSO (Legislative Service Organization) Dues
- District Telephone Equipment
- District Office Telephone Tolls
- D.C. Telephone Equipment
- Reference Material
- Reproduction of Private and Public Laws

Below each of these main headings you can create sub-categories which are useful to you. For example, under constituent communications you can list:

- Newsletters
- Questionnaires
- Town Meeting Announcements
- Special Mailings

One way to display your budget is to list every category and to put the carefully computed projected annual figure next to that category, showing the assumptions and formulas you used on separate worksheets (e.g., district rent, Sharpeville office, $\$1200 \times 12 = \$14,400$ — allows for 10% rent increase).

It is advisable, however, to project out each category month by month. This gives you greater control when monitoring actual expenditures against budget projections throughout the year. If doing this manually, simply list these budget categories and sub-categories on the left side of a ledger sheet and draw one column for each month and an extra column for the annual total for each category. The following is a sample of a budget format used by one office:

SAMPLE MANUAL BUDGET SHEET

Financial Management System

Official Expenses 1987 PROJECTION	JAN	FEB	MAR	ANNUAL
Equipment Allowance Charged Equipment Purchase Lease Equipment Maintenance New Equipment Misc. (District Leased Eqpt/Otr)				
Constituent Communications Newsletters Questionnaires District Meeting Announcements Misc. (Toll-Free Line Card/Other)				
Publications and Subscriptions District Papers National Papers Reference Periodicals Misc.				
District Office Rent Federal				
District Office Rent Private				
Official Expenses (Not OSS Acct.) Printing; Stationery/Press Paper/CR Reprints-House Printer Directories/Commercial Lists Conferences Meetings w/Constituents Misc. Office Supplies in District Printing; District Printer Office Forms/References Misc.				

**Official Expenses
1987 PROJECTION**

	JAN	FEB	MAR	ANNUAL
District Office Telephone Local Eqpt/Svc/Tolls WATS				
Member's Travel To/From District (Air, Train, Car) Taxis				
Postage Out of USA Return Radio Tapes For Preaddressed Replies Invitations, Info Requests				
Photograph Expenses District DC (SAY Congressional Photo) Misc.				
Office Supplies Allowance Charged DC Supplies/District Supplies Flags Radio/TV Tapes Envelopes/Special Stationery State Flag/State Seal Computer Supplies Special Orders Misc.				
Food and Beverage (Non-travel)				
Member Transportation Expenses Leased Car/Fuel/Mileage				
Member Travel-Related Expenses Meals/Accommodations/Misc.				
Staff Transportation Expenses Leased Car/Fuel/Mileage				
Recording Charges House Studio Facilities/Setup Radio Taping TV Taping Special/Misc.				

**Official Expenses
1987 PROJECTION**

	JAN	FEB	MAR	ANNUAL
C & P Toll Calls In lieu of WATS Member Credit Card Calls				
C & P Local Service Office Equipment Pro-Rate House Switchboard				
FTS District Office(s) H.I.S. Computer Reimbursements				
Official Photographer Charge Extra Prints, House Photographer				
LSO Dues				
District Telephone Equipment				
Telephone Tolls				
DC Telephone Equipment				
Reference Material				
TOTAL:				

You are now ready to fill in the numbers in pencil. Start with the major "fixed" costs like rent and equipment leases. (We put "fixed" in quotation marks because in cutback management nothing is beyond review, but it helps to begin by differentiating the relatively fixed from the variable costs.) Then, using the planning and costing information from the functional time-lines, and other information as relevant, fill in all projected costs and total them up for the year. If you also have your allocation figures for the coming year, you'll have a very good idea how your planning matches your budgetary resources and whether you have some tough decisions to make regarding trade-offs. If you don't have your allocation figure, use the best approximation you can based on available information and consider what trade-offs you'll be prepared to make if the allocation comes in at 5%, 10%, or 20% less than what you expected. That way, you're unlikely to be caught off guard.

Chapter 3

BALANCING THE OFFICE BUDGET

"We need to devote a great deal of thought to the ethical dimensions of cutbacks . . . for example, what the ethical responsibility of an organization is to its terminated employees and decoupled clients."

Charles H. Levine
Cutback Management Specialist

BALANCING THE BUDGET

Now we need to confront what may be the hardest part of the cutback management process. You have given real care to articulating your mission, analyzing your situation, eliminating anachronisms, prioritizing functional goals, assigning staff accountability and project milestones, and computing realistic budget numbers. You now find that this well-crafted game plan which focuses on legitimate priorities appears unaffordable. Cuts will have to be made not from fat, but from muscle and bone. What are your options?

COST-SAVING TIPS

Well, the first and easiest option, and one which will work if you only need to reduce a modest discrepancy between your projected expenditures and your allocation figure, is "decremental" cutting — the cut-a-little-here and cut-a-little-there tactic. You have an important tool in this book to assist you in doing this — the extensive lists of cost-saving tips in Section II. If you can find ten small cost-saving tips or two big ones, that may just do the trick. A good way to use these lists is to have the staff who are most concerned with a particular expenditure category review the tips in that category. Then have them comment on which ones may be applicable to your office and what would need to be done to implement them. The AA and office manager can coordinate the suggestions, work out the dollar savings the suggestions will effect, get the Member to sign off on them and adjust the budget accordingly.

This might make the difference and balance your budget. But what if it doesn't, by a significant margin? Will you just go over and over the budget, decrementally cutting portions of all those priority programs, spreading the pain and watering down the effectiveness of the programs? Or should you be prepared to make further strategic choices involving painful trade-offs? Let's examine the latter option and see what potential benefits or liabilities it holds.

REVIEWING YOUR EXPENDITURE PATTERN

Another tool this manual provides which has not previously been available is a method of comparing your office budget with expenditure patterns in offices with similar official expense allowances. The value of this tool is that it provides a rough guide to help you determine if your budget is skewed significantly in one or more categories. This is NOT to imply that if you are budgeting significantly above the normal level in one or more categories your budget is inherently wrong. After all, the whole point of this manual is to help you tailor a plan and budget to YOUR office's needs. But a telecommunications or travel budget 50% above the normal range for similar offices signals that you should carefully review the assumptions on which your budgeting in those categories is based.

It is possible that there is previously unrecognized room for considerable savings in these specific categories. You may want to re-examine the cost-saving tips in those categories to see if you overlooked any basic cost-saving strategies. Or you may want to consult with a friendly office from your state delegation to examine the differences between their operations and yours in those categories. Or, you may simply want to challenge your assumptions and re-think your priorities in those categories. Doing any or all of these things may open the door to a fresh approach which serves your purposes within the constraints of your budget.

But what if it doesn't? Well, then you are probably at the point most distasteful to the cutback manager — the need to review the largest expenditure of all, staff salaries.

CLERK-HIRE VS OFFICIAL EXPENSES

Up to now, we have not mentioned that you can raise or lower your official expense budget by transferring a maximum of \$40,000 between official expense and clerk hire funds. But, as you know, this is always in the AA's consciousness when working out the budget. In a period of fiscal stress, it may become necessary to confront the question: "Should we sacrifice staff salaries to meet our other goals?"

The loyalty factor in congressional offices is often high on both sides — the boss and the staff. As a result, Members often keep staff aboard when objective factors militate against doing so; likewise, staff often stay aboard, foregoing more attractive opportunities elsewhere. Our recent survey reinforces this perception by finding one of that the most common strategies congressional offices employed when confronted with a 4.3% official expense cut and a 10.2% clerk hire cut was to transfer money INTO the clerk hire account.

What this tells us is that most offices recoil from cutting back on staff if any other options are open to them. But what if there really aren't other options? What if, in addition to being short the funds needed for your tightly crafted official expense budget, you ALSO have suffered another cut in clerk hire allowance?

SALARY CUTS VS. DISMISSALS

Obviously, you are left with the choice of cutting salaries (selectively or across-the-board) or letting one or more staff members go. What a lousy pair of choices! A few offices might opt for the salary cuts through one or more mechanisms, including furloughs. They might be motivated by the particular closeness of the staff, a sense of equity or a belief that the workload demands retaining all staff (and perhaps the hope that the cuts will be at least partially rescinded later in the year). But for many offices we would argue that, in the long run, this is not the right choice, for either the office or the staff.

Because congressional staff are an uncommonly loyal breed, many will swallow the bitter pill of no salary review for a year or even two years. But sooner or later the personal stresses will mount and affect office morale and productivity. Unless there is at least some prospect of financial growth, important members of the team eventually will find it necessary to defect. The tough question you must confront as a manager is whether you will choose who you lose or whether the choice will be made for you. Are you willing to see your "best" staffer leave, and your "worst" staffer stay, as can so easily occur? You will also have to decide whether it is preferable to inflict the immediate, sharp pain of dismissal or the less severe, but chronic pain of salary freezes and cuts?

Each office must find the best answer to these tough questions for itself. But there are some extensions of the planning process which you can use to help you clarify the office's needs and interests, especially if you are forced into the position of having to decide which staff to let go.

FITTING PERSONNEL TO THE PLAN

If you have followed the sequence of planning steps suggested in this manual, you have developed a new game plan for the office which, to some degree, will alter the activities the office performs. Certain functions will be de-emphasized, others will be given new emphasis, some may be dropped, new ones will be added. It is useful to review how these changes will affect job descriptions and office workloads.

For example, if your game plan calls for sharply increasing emphasis on town meetings and simultaneously curtailing targeted newsletters, your field rep and your scheduler may suddenly be carrying dramatically increased workloads while your LA/Press Assistant who generates the newsletter is significantly unburdened. If you have elected to make federal worker retirement benefits a major issue while de-emphasizing your opposition to record levels of defense spending, there may be a tangible shift in the importance of the work of one LA relative to the work of another.

It can be useful to chart these functional changes to get an overview of workload and responsibility shifts in the office. Review your planning notes and fill in the following data:

FUNCTIONAL CHANGE AND STAFF RESPONSIBILITY CHART

From this process you can determine whether the workload of a particular staffer has materially diminished; you can get added perspective on whose importance to the game plan has increased and whose has decreased. Whether or not you will reduce your staff complement, this is a good exercise to alert you to adjustments in job descriptions and workloads which may be needed. But, if you do need to choose who to let go, this can be a direct aid in making this tough decision.

PRODUCTIVITY VS SOCIAL EQUITY

Needless to say, a staffer's projected value to the game plan isn't the only thing that must be taken into account when making a personnel reduction decision. The major question facing you is if you will use this as the primary criteria or if you will use the criteria of "equity."

Equity may be slippery to establish. It is somewhat a matter of tradition and somewhat a matter of perception. In some offices, dismissing a moderately productive staffer who has been with the Member since his first campaign may be perceived by staff as callous and "getting ahead by stepping on the backs of your friends." In another office, retaining an old-timer who draws twice the salary of anyone else and is perceived to do only half the work may be regarded as indefensible favoritism.

In the real world, your decision will be a subtle blend of these factors — productivity and social equity based on an intimate knowledge of the office. Be sure to take them both into account when weighing your choices.

In the midst of whatever shuffle occurs, you may also consider bringing aboard a new staffer or two. If you do, it is an excellent opportunity to carefully match their skills and experience to the requirements of the new game plan. There are two points of caution, however, if you do this:

First, if you have taken the severe step of dismissing staff to balance your budget, we assume you have decided that it was more important to retain the rest of your team intact by creating prospects for salary growth. Don't lose this advantage by committing all funds made available by the dismissals to new programs and new staff.

Second, with very limited resources to reward staff with salary increases, the question of whether or not you promote from within assumes new importance. Failing to seriously consider existing staff as potential candidates to fill a vacant or soon-to-be-vacated position (in the personal office or the committee) can cost you the team cohesion you were seeking. It sends a signal to staff that they are in dead-end jobs. An existing staffer may not be quite as well-credentialed as a recruited candidate, but he or she has proven to work well with your particular team. This is an important credential in itself. If, given good guidance and supervision, the individual has the potential to grow into the senior position, the positive effects this can have on your team may make the decision to forego a new recruit a worthwhile trade-off.

DISMISSALS — SMOOTHING THE TRANSITION

Twenty percent of offices responding to our recent survey had to dismiss staff to cope with the first budget cuts generated by Gramm-Rudman-Hollings in 1986. If deeper cuts are sustained, more offices will be forced to follow suit.

Without assuming that you will dismiss some staff, it is important to discuss **HOW** to do so if you must. **HOW** you make a dismissal can make an enormous difference to the morale, productivity and loyalty of those staff who are left. It can have a very great effect on the success or failure of a cutback effort. Of course, it is equally important to the person dismissed and to their long-term attitude toward the office.

Before you even announce a dismissal, rumors may start circulating. These can have an extremely harmful effect on morale. To prevent rumors, or to rip them in the bud, keep people informed about what is happening in a straightforward, unalarming manner. Maintain an **OPEN** non-paternalistic atmosphere, allowing room for the cycle of denial, venting of frustration, and recommitment which are part of the fiscal crisis syndrome discussed earlier in this manual. Consider providing a means of confidential communication so that staffers can voice their concerns, complaints, and suggestions. This type of approach will help you maintain workload and performance during the emotionally difficult transition period. If more than one dismissal will be necessary, try to announce them at the same time and clearly state that there will be no others.

The one word that sums up everything when dismissals are necessary is "decency." We don't need to define decency — people know it when they see it and know it when they don't. Lack of decency can include giving a staffer two hours to clear out the person's desk and vacate the office, bad-mouthing the individual to other staff in justification of the dismissal, claiming that he or she has left to accept another opportunity when everyone in the office knows this is untrue, or a host of other incivilities which all of us have witnessed over the years.

It is critical, both to the health of your office and the health of the dismissed staffer, that the process be conducted with as much compassion, sensitivity and practical good sense as possible. Besides the intangible morale factors already discussed, there is a very tangible factor to consider.

Regardless of how you choose which staffer or staffers to dismiss, if they have been with you longer than a few months they have a great deal of minute knowledge concerning the office operations they have been performing. You are now either replacing them with a lower-paid staff member or you are eliminating some of their functions and dividing the rest among other staff. In either case, it will greatly contribute to a smooth transition if the departing staff member writes down all the details of the various functions he or she has been performing and puts them in the hands of the appropriate people who will now be responsible for those functions. It will also be of considerable help if the departing staffer spends some time each week, for the next few weeks, working with those who are assuming the various functions to answer questions, provide institutional memory, clarify subtleties, etc. In order to do this well, the departing staffer must feel that he is being treated with respect and must retain goodwill for the Member and staff.

The following is a brief discussion of some of the policies and procedures to consider if the prospect of personnel cutbacks looms.

INFORMING THE STAFFER

You need to decide who will tell the affected staffer. In almost all cases it should be the AA, but this may vary, depending on such factors as the staffer's relationship with the Member and the personalities involved. Whether or not it is the Member who breaks the news, at some point — in virtually all cases — the staffer should have the opportunity for a final discussion with the Member.

If the staffer has a supervisor, he or she should be consulted before telling the staffer. The supervisor may have some vital information which affects your decision, or the manner or timing in which you implement it. You may also have to help the supervisor adjust to the prospect and deal with their practical concerns over how the workload will be redistributed. With the exception of informing the supervisor, however, decency demands telling the affected staffer before informing anyone else in the office.

Opinions vary about WHEN to tell a staffer they are being dismissed. Some suggest on Friday afternoon so the individual has the weekend to deal with the shock. Others counsel that this can send the staffer into depression without benefit of support from the office. You probably should tell the staffer in the middle of the week, towards the end of the day. Be prepared to spend some time with them in private if they need to vent. Let them take the rest of the day or the next day off if they want to, but be available to see them again during this time period. Questions, concerns, and feelings will arise which did not occur to them during the initial shock.

Be candid when your decision is financially or capacity oriented. Having come through the planning process, a reasonably bright staffer will have sized up the situation. Knowing shifts in emphasis will have prepared the person for the worst. Make sure you are forthright and accurate, while being compassionate.

TRANSITION

As discussed above, you need the staffer to help make an orderly transition of his or her functions to other staff. You should have a firm idea of how long you can afford to retain the staffer in a transitional capacity. Ideally, this will be consistent with your intuitive sense of decency regarding how much notice the staffer deserves in light of his past service. Clearly, the transition of the staffer's functions should be made as quickly as possible to those assuming those functions. This will free the staffer to begin a job search while continuing to serve the Member in an advisory capacity for the duration of the transition.

OUTPLACEMENT

The most important help you can give the outgoing staffer is in finding a new position. The help you can provide includes:

- After the staffer has recovered from any initial shock, have them spend some time working out the next appropriate career move. Encourage them to identify two or three generic choices; it will help others to assist them in their search.
- Personal calls by the Member on behalf of the staffer to unearth opportunities among colleagues and associates. This is the most powerful signal of support that can be given the outgoing staffer.
- Asking other appropriate staff to activate their networks to search for opportunities. This can be both effective and nurturing.
- Allowing the staffer to retain a work space and the use of office facilities for a while, (including having his messages taken), can make both a practical and psychological difference in the search.
- Providing a strong letter of endorsement of the individual's capabilities, good character, and industry signed by the Member can be a powerful booster to the individual.
- Occasional counseling, handholding and morale boosting during the search. This will usually be needed and will always be appreciated.

BENEFITS

The threatened loss of benefits can be a matter of great practical concern to a departing staffer. Again, decency dictates doing anything possible to help minimize a departing staffer's vulnerability due to loss of health insurance, life insurance or other benefits. The Finance Office has a staff benefits specialist who can advise on available options. It would be appropriate to walk the staffer over to the Finance Office to meet the benefits specialist who can discuss conversion of health and life insurance, unemployment compensation, Ramspeck forms for those interested in employment with the federal government, and retirement options. If you have available staff slots you can place the staffer on unpaid Leave of Absence which temporarily maintains the individual's staff status.

TERMINATION

Sometimes a departing staffer doesn't find a new position by the time the agreed-upon transition period expires, and continues to hang out in the office. If this occurs, it is probably best to establish an agreed-upon date when the individual will vacate the workstation. There are several reasons for this: the staffer needs to "cut the umbilical cord" for his or her own sake; the office will be tempted to unfairly utilize the person for production needs; morale may be adversely affected by the prolonged presence of the cutback casualty. Of course, the office should continue to provide other forms of emotional and informational support as appropriate.

Everyone hopes you will be able to balance your budget without having to lose loyal, effective staff. But this won't always be possible in a prolonged cutback situation. In this case, we hope this advice cushions the shock for both the outgoing staffer and the remaining team.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers assume a new importance in periods of budget cutbacks. You may have had a couple of staff leave for one reason or another and put off replacing them as a means of easing the strain on your budget. Or you may have been forced to dismiss a productive staffer and lack the resources to hire a replacement, even at a lower salary. Volunteers can go some way toward filling the gaps.

There are House and Senate rules governing the use of interns and volunteers which you may want to review. This will prevent you from crossing any lines you shouldn't in your eagerness to fill the gaps left in your staff line-up. But generally, these are some approaches you should consider:

- Enhance your Washington intern program year-round. Assign an interested staffer the job of contacting the colleges and universities in your district. Contact the career guidance offices, the experiential learning programs, the political science and public administration programs. Build and work these relationships to develop a steady stream of unpaid (or stipended, if you can afford it) Washington interns.
- Enhance or create an intern program in your district offices. You can use the same resources plus two others — social services programs (future social workers will be fascinated by your casework activity) and high schools.
- Develop other volunteer pools, such as senior citizens, particularly in your district office operations. You may be able to attract some impressively experienced talent this way.
- If you have attractive substantive roles to fill in your legislative line-up or press activity, be sure to make these known to the appropriate fellowship programs which provide highly qualified personnel for up to a year.

Volunteer staff **CANNOT** replace paid staff, but they can make a big difference to an office which has had to cut back in personnel. Volunteers can help you improve immediate office productivity, and can help prevent long-term staff burnout stemming from excessive workload.

CHAPTER 4

**SUCCESS THROUGH ADHERENCE TO
THE PLAN AND BUDGET**

"It takes twenty years to make an overnight success."

Eddie Cantor

MONITORING THE PLAN AND BUDGET

At this point you have balanced your expected budget expenditures with your allocation figures, calculating the necessary adjustments between clerk hire and official expense allowances, and cutting back on expenses in either or both categories. You have a plan and a budget which will serve as guidelines and coordinating factors for the rest of the fiscal year. Now you need to develop mechanisms to implement the planning, track its progress, monitor adherence to expenditure ceilings and modify the whole thing as changing circumstances warrant. Success rests on all these factors. We'll begin by discussing methods of implementing and reviewing the game plan and then discuss methods of monitoring adherence to the budget.

GAMEPLAN TRACKING MECHANISMS — ASSESSING CURRENT PROCEDURES

It is probably a good idea to spend a few moments reviewing existing mechanisms you use to monitor plans or projects. You may not have previously conducted planning exercises as elaborate as those suggested here, but you have of course operated with some degree of planning and you have implemented various new projects from time to time. It will be useful to ask yourself a few questions to assess the effectiveness of your existing mechanisms for implementing and tracking your planning. These include:

- Is new planning fully communicated to those concerned?
- Is it communicated in memo form so staff can refer back to it as needed?
- Is it ONLY communicated in memo form, running the risk of getting buried in the mounds of paper that cross any staffer's desk?
- Is it communicated in a way that builds understanding and consensus, or is it issued as a decree?
- What formal mechanisms are in place to track its progress? Who is responsible for reviewing its progress?
- How much attention do staff give to new planning or new projects?
- Is staff attention to the planning reinforced, or are they side-tracked with instructions that compete for priority with the components of the plan?
- Does the plan get updated and revised to take into account changing circumstances?
- Are new plans and projects successfully being implemented? If not, what other reasons than those suggested above account for this?

Making a simple assessment of existing implementation and tracking mechanisms can help you identify any strengths or weaknesses your office has in this regard. These can be utilized or corrected, as the case may be, when implementing your current planning.

INDIVIDUAL TRACKING MECHANISMS

The broad goals for each part of the office have been expressed on time-lines or memos. Individual staffers have been assigned their personal responsibilities for implementation. Each staffer will fulfill their responsibilities in his or her own individual style. Depending on the staffer's track record and the office's overall management style, each will be allowed a long or a short leash. Most will instinctively start a file for each activity and will start accumulating relevant papers and notes in that file. Each staffer must be able to envision the sequence of actions needed to achieve the goal, and the time-frames in which these need to be done if the overall objective is to be accomplished on schedule. Some staffers will plot these steps in a formal, written style; others will take an informal approach to organizing these tasks.

Staffers who have any difficulty organizing their work or meeting agreed-upon deadlines should be encouraged to write out their individual action plan for achieving an assigned goal, listing actions and assigning sequences and intermediary deadlines. These can be kept in the file created for that activity for reference.

Staffers should review their responsibilities within the game plan weekly, either by going through these individual files they have created or by reviewing the planning memos and timelines. Creating a weekly to-do list of all actions related to the game plan is a practical way of retaining a focus on the plan while coping with the numerous other activities demanded of a staffer. A possible format for such a to-do list might be as follows:

WEEKLY TO-DO LIST

STAFFER _____ WEEK _____

ACTION PLAN GOAL

TO DO

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

ACTION PLAN GOAL

TO DO

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

OTHER PRIORITIES

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

ACTION PLAN GOAL

TO DO

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

ACTION PLAN GOAL

TO DO

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

MISCELLANEOUS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

TEAM TRACKING MECHANISMS

WEEKLY STAFF MEETINGS

In addition to keeping individual staff focused on the game plan, it is important to keep the office coordinated as a team. A mechanism for doing this can be to turn those dry, rambling and erratically scheduled staff meetings into an effective monitoring tool.

The following is one possible approach which can be used to fine-tune the plan, make minor adjustments to reflect changing staff or political realities, and stay on course for accomplishing your primary objectives.

1. Start the meeting one-half hour before regular working hours begin.
2. Hold a meeting once a week.
3. Limit the meeting to one-half hour.
4. Dedicate each meeting to only one topic. For example, you might devote one meeting to analyze whether the legislative program is where you said it would be by this date. Next week, you might spend 30 minutes on the communications program and whether it has achieved or fallen short of your scheduled objective.
5. The basic agenda is to track program status, identify what needs to be done to stay or get back on track, and figure out how to improve interactions between the staff and the Member.
6. Have the relevant staffer chair the meeting. If it's a press meeting, the press secretary is chairperson, for example.
7. Spend ten minutes on a status report. Relate the report to the game plan calendar.
8. Spend ten minutes with (in this example) the press secretary asking the staff for any special assistance or cooperation needed for upcoming press efforts. The requests should be as specific as possible and consistent with the overall plan and individual job descriptions.
9. Spend ten minutes on things the staff needs from the chairperson (in this case, the press secretary).
10. If absolutely necessary, steal five minutes from one of these three segments for emergency announcements or requests.
11. Adjourn promptly after 30 minutes, so everyone starts work on time.

PERIODIC REVIEWS

Periodically, as conditions warrant, the entire game plan or sections of it can be reviewed and amended. Normally this can be accomplished by the relevant members of the original planning group in an informal session. If necessary, you can repeat the steps of the planning process to hammer out a new set of priorities and action plans. Don't be dismayed if events force you to modify your plan. A plan on Capitol Hill can have a short "half-life." It is still a powerful tool if refined to accommodate changing circumstances. Refined does not mean abandoned.

If the original game plan is allowed to become irrelevant through your failure to review and amend it as appropriate, your office will return to whatever primeval state of confusion from whence it came. If it was worth your time to create a comprehensive plan in the first place, it's worth your time to maintain it.

HELPING THE MEMBER ADHERE TO THE PLAN

As is true in most aspects of congressional life, the extent to which the Member emphasizes the plan will significantly determine how much emphasis the staff give it.

A Member who is truly committed to the planning process will stay alert to new suggestions from staffers which seem to diverge from the agreed upon plan and query the staffer as to how his or her proposal fits with it. Staff will quickly take the hint. Conversely, Members should avoid being defensive and carefully consider a staffer's remarks when he or she queries the Member about how some new idea of his fits into the plan.

AAs who are committed to maintaining the long-range plan as a live, relevant, coordinating force in the office should make efforts to keep the Member briefed on its progress. If the Member isn't

present at the weekly staff meeting, the AA should brief the Member on the status of the functional area reviewed. Alternatively, the AA might incorporate a status report on the plan's implementation into existing briefing mechanisms with which the Member is comfortable.

ENCOURAGING STAFF ADHERENCE TO THE PLAN

In addition to the mechanisms discussed above, the Member and AA can further reinforce staff implementation of planning by making it an important part of performance review sessions. Good management requires periodic performance appraisal feedback sessions with staff. After lack of clear goals and priorities, lack of feedback is perhaps the second most common complaint CMF hears from staff in offices for whom we consult.

Staff typically work very hard. They want to occasionally hear that they are doing a good job and are appreciated. They also want to know if the Member is dissatisfied with any aspect of their performance which they need to work on correcting. They also want a chance to express their problems and growth goals and, frankly, to discuss the prospects of a salary increase. Performance review sessions scheduled at least twice a year with their direct supervisor and/or the AA and/or the Member, give them a chance at all these things.

Staff are owed this opportunity. In times of fiscal stress it is more important than ever that they get it **EVEN IF YOU CAN'T OFFER THEM A PENNY MORE IN SALARY**. In such times, you are more dependent than ever on factors like care, consideration, involvement and acknowledgement to motivate and retain staff. A non-threatening performance appraisal feedback session, which encourages a healthy two-way dialogue, will help provide or reinforce many of these factors.

The long-range plan can be further integrated into the fabric of the office by asking staff to discuss their contributions to the plan's implementation at the feedback sessions. Management (the direct supervisor, the Member and/or the AA) should also be prepared to evaluate staffers in this regard. Where merit rewards are available, at least one criterion for awarding them should be "contribution to forwarding the game plan."

If planning is to be meaningful in your office and is to serve you well, the plan must continually have life breathed into it by the Member, the management team and the staff.

THE BUDGET

The budget is itself a prime tool for monitoring adherence to the game plan. If the Member or a staffer comes up with a new idea which will cost money, the budget should be immediately consulted and the tradeoffs which will be required should be made known. Without being an obstructionist, it is the responsibility of the budget manager to alert those concerned that, especially in periods of fiscal constraint, all new activities require trade-offs. The wisdom or necessity for trade-off should be justified **BEFORE** the new activity is engaged in and the office finds itself committed.

BUDGET TRACKING MECHANISMS

ACCOUNTING SYSTEMS

Most offices have accounting systems which permit them to monitor adherence to the budget. However, an office cannot rely solely on the Finance Office's report when making financial decisions. The reason for this, of course, is that the Finance Office's monthly summary only reflects those expenditures for which they have processed a vendor bill or voucher. It does not reflect other expenditures already made or committed to, but not yet vouchered or billed. This, of course, is money which is no longer available, though it appears to be if one relies solely on the finance office summary.

Therefore, each office must develop its own system to provide it with complete information. Over the last two years, Jim Altenstadter of House Information Systems (H.I.S.) has developed applications of software for personal computers which allow an office to keep track of all relevant information with a minimal time investment. Very recently, H.I.S. has institutionalized the install-

ment and training services Jim provided, so that the package is more available to offices which don't already have it. It is by far the best system the Congressional Management Foundation has seen and we encourage you to explore its potential for your office if you have not yet done so. In any case, you need some sort of a reliable system which enables you to accurately track expenditures and commitments and which shows the leeway you have to make changes in your planning.

FINANCIAL REVIEW MEETINGS

Generally speaking, you should review your financial position at least monthly. How you do this and who is involved will vary from office to office, but a model for doing so might look like this:

- Budget manager prepares a report of current expenditures and commitments in each budget category and in total, comparing these to original budget projections. Dangers and opportunities are noted.
- Section supervisors submit written requests for any expenditures they would like to be able to make over the next month that are not already allowed for in the budget, but that are justifiable according to the game plan.
- AA and budget manager juggle the numbers and decide what can be afforded, what can't be afforded, what trade-offs are indicated, or what further cutbacks are needed.
- AA meets with Member to review financial picture, make recommendations on planning and budgeting modifications and get Member to sign off on them. If the Member has been exceeding budget allocations in any category, this is a good time for the AA to take it up with the Member.
- AA makes budget decisions known to section supervisors so they can proceed or terminate their plans. AA can take the heat for any unpopular decisions and smooth out any ruffled feathers. Some things never change no matter how sophisticated management systems become.

SUMMARY

We hope that the preceding pages have sensitized you to some of the consequences you may face as managers if budget cutbacks continue to be a fact of life over the next few years. We hope, too, that we have provided you with some additional tools to choose from, when you work to refashion your office to cope with the new stresses and constraints you will face.

Despite the inherent difficulties in the situation, we feel that there is also an opportunity to clarify and focus the mission each Member sets for his or her office, and to develop more effective and efficient approaches to succeeding in that mission.

We wish you every success in using this manual to better fulfill the responsibilities of your office and the expectations of your constituents.

APPENDIX

The following is the raw data collected from Section A of the congressional office survey which was conducted as part of the research for this manual. The salient points of Section B of the survey have been reported in Section I and II of the manual.

The total number of responses reflected in this section is 102. Eleven questionnaires which were lacking certain key responses (for purposes of correlation between Section A and B) were eliminated from the database. A handful of offices failed to respond to some questions. Thus, some response totals will only add up to 97 or 98.

In all cases, the numerical figure represents the number of offices which responded with that answer, not a percentage. However, because the sample is approximately 100, the numerical figure also closely approximates the percentage.

Where 1 - 5 scales are used, the mean value is also reported.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. District Location (Approximate Distance from Washington)

0-500 miles: 25	500-1000: 30	1000-2000: 20
2000-3000: 17	3000+: 5	

2. Is district primarily

Urban: 17	Suburban: 16	Rural: 19	Mixed: 47
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3. Number of Terms in Congress

2 or less: 38	3-6: 44	7 or More: 15
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4. Margin of victory in the last general election

50% - 54%: 17	55% - 60%: 10	61% - 65%: 20	Above 65%: 49
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EFFECTS OF GRAMM-RUDMAN ON 1986 EXPENDITURES

5. Given the cuts necessitated by Gramm-Rudman, check off those broad expense categories in which your office has made or expects to make the deepest cuts this year.

Equipment	: 31
Constituent Communication	: 59
Telecommunications	: 15
Supplies	: 27
Travel	: 51
District Office Rent	: 12
Subscriptions	: 37
LSO Dues	: 55

6. How has your office dealt with the reduction in clerk hire allowance for 1986? (Check as many as are applicable)

Reducing selected salaries	: 3
Across the board salary reductions	: 2
Dismissals	: 20
Leaving vacancies unfilled	: 60
Transferring additional funds to clerk hire	: 49
Foregoing scheduled salary reviews	: 51
No changes necessary	: 7
Furloughs	: 5
Reduced obligations to shared employees	: 21

7. How much, if at all, have the recent budget cuts reduced your office's capacity to perform the following functions? (1 = not at all, 5 = drastically; circle one number next to each function)

	Number of Responses:				
	1	2	3	4	5
Legislative research	62	26	11	2	1
Mean: 1.6					

Constituent Service Mean: 1.6	55	32	12	2	1
Constituent Communication — Outreach Mail Mean: 2.7	23	15	39	16	9
Constituent Communication — Response Mail Mean: 1.6	60	27	12	3	0
Member Travel to District Mean: 1.4	74	16	10	1	1
District Office Operations Mean: 1.9	44	34	19	3	2
Media Activities Mean: 1.8	54	26	16	4	2
Telecommunications Mean: 1.7	55	25	17	4	1
Automating Office Mean: 2.2	43	19	26	9	5

PLANNING AND BUDGETING PROCESS

8. Please rate your office on a scale of 1 - 5 for each of the following questions. 1 — "no or very inadequate," 5 — "yes or fully adequate."

A. Does your office conduct a formal, written planning process each year which identifies priorities based on which a realistic budget can be constructed ?

1 — 22 2 — 8 3 — 26 4 — 25 5 — 20
Mean: 3.1

B. Does your office have a written, projected annual budget for each major expense category for FY 86 ? (second session, 99th Congress)

1 — 11 2 — 7 3 — 13 4 — 16 5 — 53
Mean: 3.9

C. Does your office have an accounting system which permits you to regularly track expenditures against budget projections?

1 — 10 2 — 6 3 — 12 4 — 19 5 — 54
Mean: 4.0

D. How good are the existing resources for assisting you to find more cost-effective means of performing your office's functions?

1 — 14 2 — 20 3 — 36 4 — 18 5 — 12
Mean: 2.9

E. What would assist your office in improving its planning and budgeting process? Check as many as are appropriate.

Member clarification of priorities	32
More formal long range planning	22
More staff input into planning	10
Training on planning and budgeting techniques	35
Better adherence to long range planning	21
Better expenditure tracking system	31
Better prediction on official allowance/ clerk hire allocations	61
Better prediction on cost increases	66

F. Assuming your Member is returning, when do you anticipate conducting your planning and budgeting for 1987?

A. After adjournment — 32	B. After election day — 25
C. After Thanksgiving — 22	D. After Christmas — 14

ABOUT THE CONGRESSIONAL MANAGEMENT FOUNDATION

The Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan (501) (c) (3) organization providing management information and assistance to Members of congress and their staffs. CMF has worked with congressional offices since 1976 to help them cope with a skyrocketing work-load and an increasingly complex and challenging environment. CMF's goal is to improve congressional performance.

CMF is an independent organization. It has won the trust of congressional offices through a decade of speaking to their needs.

CMF's programs and services include:

Congressional Staff Seminars—These seminars, covering 50 management topics have attracted Members and staff from over 300 congressional offices.

Congressional Office Consultations—More than 60 congressional offices have commissioned CMF to consult with them on in-depth efforts to improve their daily operations.

Publications of CMF Guidebooks—CMF guidebooks have been published on topics including automation, personnel, space utilization, intern program management, grantsmanship, legislative resources and the ethics of congressional life. They are used not only by Members and their staffs but by corporations, universities and nonprofit organizations interested in learning how to work effectively with Congress.

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CMF welcomes both congressional office inquiries about our unique services and requests from other organizations interested in improving their understanding of the operation of Congress.

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